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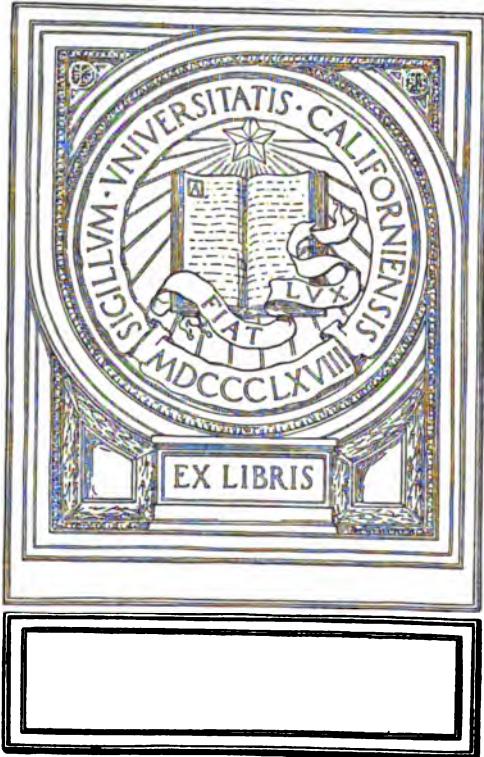
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GUARDING THE MAILS.



Robert L. Tracy

from
Alvarey & Son

Dec. 26th

1886.





"THEY BOTH SAT DOWN, WHEN THE OFFICER CONTINUED, 'HOW MUCH OF THAT MONEY HAVE YOU LEFT?—NOW DO NOT LIE TO ME.' See Page 48.

GUARDING THE MAILS;
OR,
THE SECRET SERVICE
OF THE
POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT.
BEING A RECORD OF
MAIL ROBBERIES
AND THEIR
DETECTION.
EMBRACING SKETCHES OF WONDERFUL EXPLOITS OF
SPECIAL AGENTS IN THE DETECTION, PURSUIT,
AND CAPTURE OF
DEPREDATORS UPON THE MAILS,
WITH A COMPLETE
DESCRIPTION OF THE MANY MEANS AND COMPLICATED
CONTRIVANCES OF THE WILY AND UNSCRUPULOUS
TO DEFRAUD THE PUBLIC.
BY
P. H. WOODWARD
CHIEF SPECIAL AGENT IN THE POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

ILLUSTRATED BY ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-TWO ENGRAVINGS.

J. P. FITCH,
HARTFORD, CONN.
1882.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1876,
By P. H. WOODWARD,
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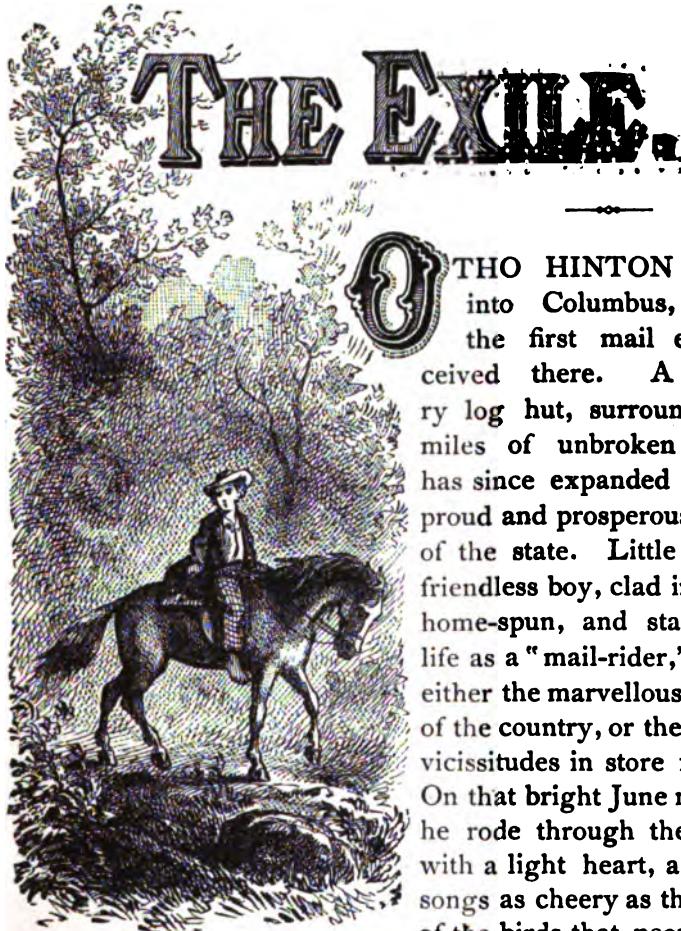
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Starting in Life.

labor brought honest though scanty recompense.

Faithful to employers, diligent in the discharge of every duty, the lad soon attracted the attention of influential patrons, when advancement rapidly followed. Promotion succeeded promotion, till Otho Hinton became general agent of the

O THO HINTON carried into Columbus, Ohio, the first mail ever received there. A solitary log hut, surrounded by miles of unbroken forest, has since expanded into the proud and prosperous capital of the state. Little did the friendless boy, clad in coarse home-spun, and starting in life as a "mail-rider," foresee either the marvellous growth of the country, or the strange vicissitudes in store for him. On that bright June morning he rode through the woods with a light heart, and with songs as cheery as the carols of the birds that peopled the leafy trees, for his willing

"Ohio Stage Company," an organization wielding a large capital, and composed of some of the foremost men of the state, at the head of whom stood William Neil of Columbus. In the years 1849 and 1850 the company had a monopoly of the important mail routes in Ohio, its ramifications extending in all directions.

At the time referred to, the State Bank of Ohio, then approaching the zenith of prosperity, had established branches at all the important towns in the commonwealth, and large sums were constantly transmitted by mail between the parent institution and its various offshoots. Business of this character has since been transferred almost wholly to the express companies, so that it is difficult to realize with what confidence, in those days of primitive simplicity, men intrusted to the mails, packages containing hundreds or thousands of dollars in currency. For the most part the valuable parcels went through safely, though often, no doubt, from the well-known nature of the contents, exciting the cupidity of officials who lacked the hardihood to steal, for great precautions were then taken to preserve a trace of letters, so that any act of depredation pointed much more directly to the thief than under the less cumbersome but more economical and expeditious system which now prevails. Isolated instances of robbery were generally followed by speedy detection and punishment. Occasionally, however, a crafty rogue contrived to do a great deal of mischief before the method of his operations could be discovered.

In the year 1849 a series of alarming depredations began in Ohio. One after another, money packages containing large remittances, mailed at various offices, and addressed to different points, both in and out of the state, unaccountably disappeared. The losses were reported to the department, and referred for investigation to two or three special agents, whose districts, under the old system of division, seemed to be involved. Mr. Thomas P. Shallcross, then a young man and comparatively new in the service, though he had already

given evidence of the skill in detection which was soon to render his name a terror to evil-doers, was at the time assigned to duty in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. One day Mr. Shallcross happened to be in the office of William H. Dundas, Esq., chief clerk of the contract bureau, who, in connection with other duties, had the direct supervision of the work of special agents, and who at the moment was engaged on the reported losses from Ohio. Greatly annoyed at the prolonged continuance of the trouble, Mr. Dundas entered into an elaborate explanation of the complaints, when General Hinton, for such was now his title, quite unexpectedly dropped in. The chief clerk and he were old friends, and their greetings were very cordial.

"By the way, General," remarked Dundas, "we are having a terrible time with our mails out in your region, and we were discussing the matter as you came in. What on earth is to pay? Come, give us your views, for you, perhaps, may hold the clue."

A third of a century, replete with honor and prosperity, had passed over the head of Otho Hinton since our first introduction to him on what was then the wild western frontier. The solidity of his form corresponded well with the supposed permanence of his fortunes. Tall, erect, and carrying a weight of two hundred and twenty-five pounds without detriment to the symmetry of a handsome figure, at the age of fifty-three he was in the prime of vigorous manhood. Yet



Otho Hinton.

those well-cut features wore at times a sinister expression far from pleasing. A sensualist by inclination and habit, he suffered the vice to gnaw at his heart till the foundations of virtue were hopelessly sapped.

At the random shot of Mr. Dundas the features of the great mail contractor winced, and his large brown eye gave a convulsive twitch, as if conscious that suspicion rested upon him already. These involuntary movements, that flitted away like a shadow, did not escape the observation of Mr. Shallcross, who has the rare gift of seeing everything without appearing to notice anything. Hinton soon walked out, to seek relief, evidently, from an atmosphere oppressive with suggestions of guilt.

"Did you mark the peculiar actions of General Hinton when you mentioned the Ohio losses?" inquired the special agent.

"No," answered Mr. Dundas, "I saw nothing unusual in his manner."

"I did," rejoined the detective. "Upon the sudden introduction of the subject, the General for a moment lost his mental balance, and betrayed a confusion that argues anything but innocence. The facts, too, all point to him as the criminal. You must have observed that the losses are not confined to a single line, but have occurred on all the important routes in the state, where, besides, there are no common points of contact or intersection. No one person could perpetrate these robberies, unless provided with a roving commission, yet the ear-marks plainly indicate that all are the work of a single hand. Hinton is the only man in whom all the required conditions meet. As general manager of the company, he passes over the different lines at will, and the little army of employés are completely subject to his command. Give me an opportunity to investigate the cases, and I will soon convince you that my suspicions are correct."

Mr. Dundas, whose native caution had been heightened by conservative influences, was a good deal nettled at what ap-

peared to him to be the hasty, rash, and indeed presumptuous conclusions of the special agent.

"How could the General get possession of the packages?" inquired he; "it would be impossible to steal them from the post-offices without instant detection, and he could not abstract them from the pouches, if he does pass over the routes, without both the collusion of the drivers and cutting the bags; yet there is no complaint that a single one has been mutilated. Of course he has no mail-keys. How, then, could he commit the robberies?"

"Are you aware," inquired Shallcross, "that a year or two ago a full set of keys was stolen from the depository in this building?"

"I have an indistinct recollection," replied the chief clerk, "that Mr. Johnson reported something of the kind, but General Hinton never took them. I have too much confidence in his honor and integrity to harbor the suspicion for a moment that he would commit so base an act, even if the opportunity was granted him, which may be doubted. To my mind the conclusion to which you have so hastily jumped seems utterly preposterous."

"Perhaps argument will not bring us any nearer to agreement," rejoined the detective; "but in view of future developments let me again venture the prediction that when the truth is brought to light, the man in whom you place such unbounded faith will be exposed as the criminal."

"As a friend," answered the chief clerk, "let me advise you not to talk in this manner about General Hinton. I have known him long and intimately, and have yet to see the first act indicating knavery or dishonor. The opinion of those most closely associated with him in business may be inferred from the trusts they confide to him. He directs the financial management of the Ohio Stage Company, draws their mail pay, attends to the matters requiring congressional action, and is their accredited agent at this department. All the duties growing out of this position he has discharged satisfac-

torily for many years. Besides, the social connections of the General are powerful, both here and at home. As the personal friend of senators and cabinet ministers, he wields an influence that should not be lightly defied. Were he to hear of your remarks, he might cause you a great deal of trouble."

"My suspicions have been expressed to no human being except yourself," replied the special agent, "and I shall continue to keep my own counsels till the opportunity arises to convince you that I am right. I need hardly request you to observe equal reticence in regard to the matter, for, aside from native prudence, your interest both in the General and in the service enjoins silence."

The next day Shallcross left Washington.

On the 22d of August, 1850, the mail was robbed between Zanesville, Ohio, and Wheeling, Virginia. At that time the great eastern and western mails were carried by stage-coaches from Zanesville, *via* Wheeling, to Cumberland, Maryland, the western terminus of the Baltimore and Ohio Railway, over the famous "National Road" which was laid out and macadamized at the cost of the general government. As originally projected, the road was to extend to St. Louis, Missouri, but was never completed beyond Vincennes, Indiana, the rapid growth of our railway system superseding the old methods of transportation. In those days not unfrequently a dozen four-horse coaches, heavily loaded, left Wheeling in a single morning.

The robbery of August 22d was discovered on the arrival at Wheeling of the through pouch from Zanesville, the way-bills showing the shortage. Captain G. W. Clutter, then chief clerk in the Wheeling office, having been instructed by Mr. Shallcross to notify him immediately of any irregularities that might occur, telegraphed the fact at once. The despatch reached the detective in South Carolina, when he made the journey to Wheeling as fast as the conveyances of the period would take him.

The opportunity had arrived to test the correctness of the

theory propounded with confidence to Mr. Dundas, to be thrown back with ill-disguised contempt. Pride, not less than duty, stimulated the officer to make the investigation thorough. So far everything had happened according to expectation. Alarmed by the remarks of the chief clerk, the thief had refrained for an unusual period from a repetition of the robberies; but, as months rolled peacefully by, temptation at length overmastered fear. Even on the brink of ruin the thief cannot repress the propensity to steal. When the moorings that bind one to honesty are cut, the day of safety is passed. Some demon, cruel, relentless, vengeful, goads on the criminal to fresh hazards with a power which he finds it vain to resist.

"Like the bat of Indian brakes,
Her pinions fan the wound she makes,
And, soothing thus the dreamer's pain,
She drinks the life-blood from the vein."

On his arrival, the first object of the detective was to ascertain whether Hinton came through with the rifled pouch, on the night of August 22d, and, somewhat to his astonishment, he learned that such was not the case. Captain W. D. Terry, or "Captain Bill," as he was familiarly called, a sub-agent of the Ohio Stage Company in charge of the line between Zanesville and Wheeling, happened to be in Wheeling at the time. Without waiting to visit his family, who resided there and whom he had not seen for many months, Shallcross requested the captain to hitch up his fastest team, and take him in the direction of Zanesville as quickly as possible. Always prompt to respond to the calls of the department, Terry instantly complied, and in a few minutes the two were off.

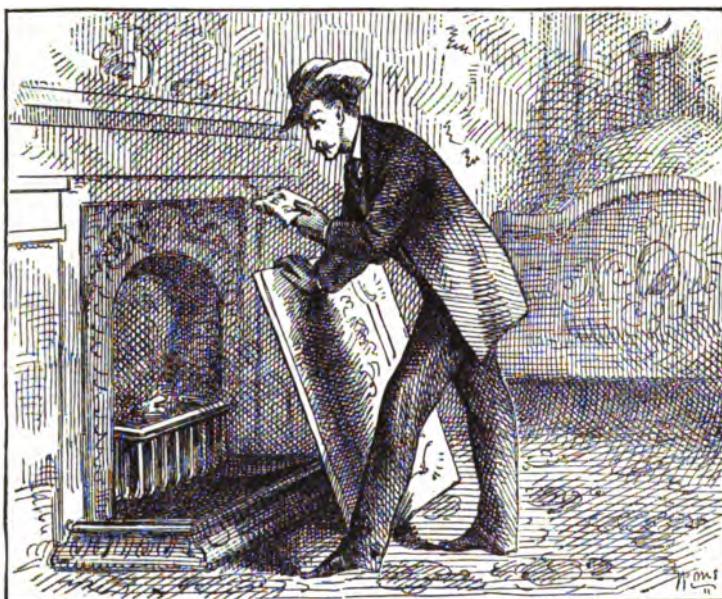
Arriving at Morristown, Ohio, the detective carelessly inquired of the son of the landlady who kept the stage-stand, if General Hinton had been there lately.

"Yes," replied the youth; "he came on the morning coach a few days ago, and stopped off."

"What morning?"

The boy looked at the register, and replied, "It was the 23d of August."

The officer sauntered up to the table where the register lay, and caught the number of the room which had been assigned to the General. Being well acquainted with the house, he proceeded up stairs, without manifesting the least concern or excitement, to the apartment occupied by Hinton, and removing the fire-board from before the grate, discovered



"Removing the fire-board from before the grate, he discovered pieces of letters, post-bills, strings, sealing-wax, and paper partly burned."

pieces of letters, post-bills, strings, sealing-wax, and paper partly burned, with a post-bill from Hillsboro', Ohio, almost entire. These remnants were carefully gathered up and placed in an envelope. In a few minutes he returned to find Captain Terry at the door with a relay of horses, when the two gentlemen stepped into the carriage and were off.

From Morristown they drove to Cambridge, stopping at the

intermediate stations long enough to allay, by inquiries having no relation to the object of the journey, any suspicion that might arise from seeing an agent of the post-office and of the stage company travelling together. At Concord, some distance west of Cambridge, and the first stand east from Zanesville, they met "Jake" Fricker, the driver in charge of the eastern bound coach on the evening of August 22d. Taking him aside, the officer remarked, "Jake, I wish to ask you one or two questions privately."

"Proceed," replied the Jehu of the line, striking an attitude of attention.

"Jake, you took the coach out of Zanesville on the evening of August 22d. Was General Hinton with you on that trip?"

"Yes, the General was along. I remember it well."

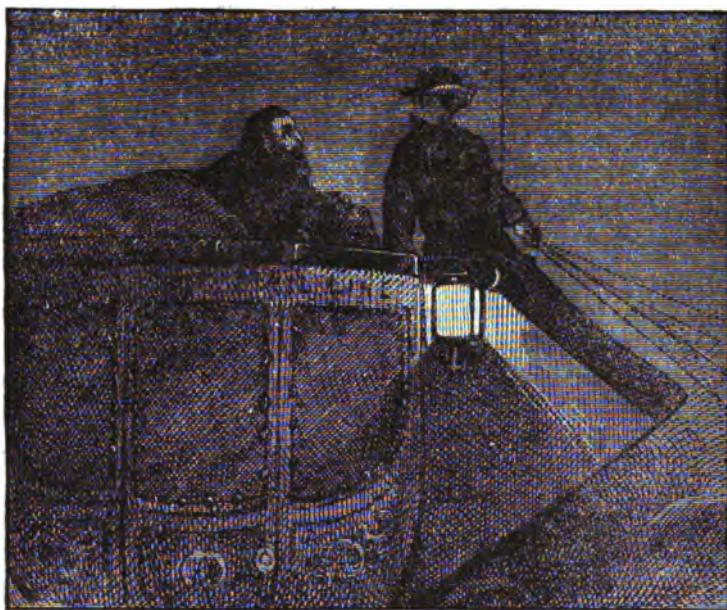
"Now, Jake," continued the officer, "I want you to tell me just where the General was that night, and what he did. Did he handle the mail-bags at all, and if so, when and how? I want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"The truth you shall have," replied the driver; "for if there is anything wrong, I want to be clear of it. If the mails have been interfered with, I don't want to be blamed, and don't mean to be if I can help it. On that trip, as we were starting from Zanesville, General Hinton got up on the box with me, and said, 'I believe I'll take a ride with you down the road.' He talked and smoked till after dark, when he remarked, with a played-out sort of a yawn, 'Jake, I'm tired and sleepy. I believe I will get up on the top of the coach, under the canvas, and take a nap. Hand me one of the mail-bags out of the front boot for a pillow. Don't give me the way mail, but a through pouch, for I don't wish to be waked up at every post-office.' Not thinking it any harm, as I had often done the same thing before, I drew out the bag made up at Zanesville for Wheeling. He took it, and lay down at full length on top of the coach, under the canvas. When I reached the end of my drive, he was still there, sound asleep as I supposed, for he did not speak or

move. The next driver took him on down the road; and that is all I know about the matter."

The locked pouches, or as many of them as could be stowed there, were then carried in the front boot of the coaches under the feet of the drivers.

Having completed the statement of facts, Jake yielded to the promptings of an irrepressible curiosity and inquired innocently, "Mr. Shallcross, has the mail been robbed?"



"Jake, I'm tired and sleepy; I believe I will get up on top, under the canvas, and take a nap."

"That is just what I wish to find out," answered that gentleman. "Have you heard that it was?"

"Well," replied Jake, scratching his head doubtfully, "I can't exactly say I have; but I've had some d—d funny questions asked me lately about the mails."

The driver was cautioned to say nothing to any one about the interview; and in a short time Captain Terry and the officer left for Zanesville behind a span of fresh horses.

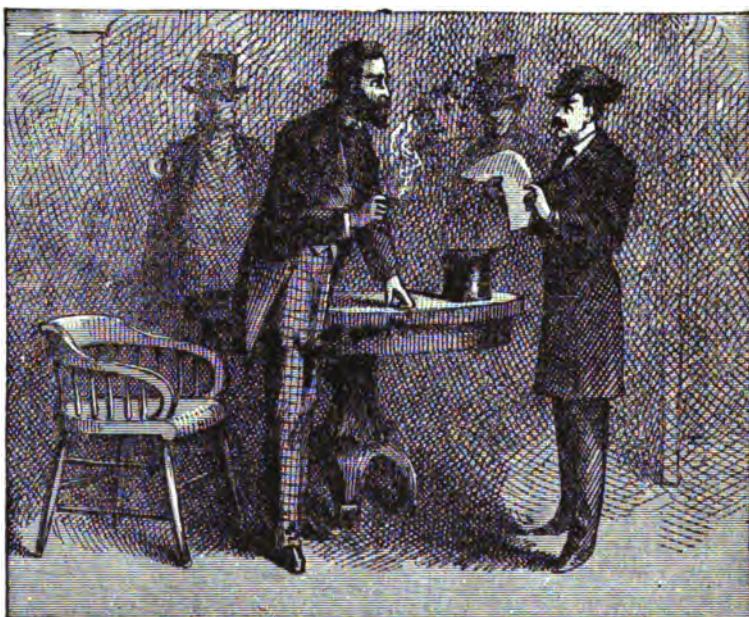
On arriving there, Shallcross soon learned that Mr. Moses Wheeler, a local banker, on the afternoon of August 22d, mailed a large package of eastern bank-notes which failed to reach the distribution office at Wheeling. Of a part of these the banker had retained a full description, a copy of which was turned over to the officer.

By telegraphing to different points, it was ascertained that Hinton was seen in Pittsburgh a few days before, and thither the detective proceeded by the first coach. Too restless to remain long in one place, the General had left for Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Shallcross at once sent a despatch to D. M. Haskell, Esq., postmaster at Cleveland, giving a description of the stolen money, and directing him to employ some one to watch every movement of Hinton while in the city. In case the General visited any bank or broker's office, the party on the lookout was to follow immediately for the purpose of gaining possession of any bills he might have parted with in exchange for current funds.

Mr. Haskell laid the matter before Thomas McKinstry, deputy United States marshal, and the two undertook the task of "shadowing" Hinton, who had already arrived. After dinner the General sauntered up and down two or three of the principal streets, and on passing the office of a prominent broker, disappeared quickly through the doorway. A few seconds after he came out, the postmaster hurried in, for during the interim he had slipped across the street and taken refuge in an adjoining store. Going up to the banker, he inquired in a low, confidential voice, "Mr. Crittenden, did the gentleman who just left exchange any money here?"

"Yes," replied the broker, who had not finished arranging the identical bills; "and here it is," pushing out the notes just received at a discount of five per cent. On comparing them with the description, they were found to correspond. Arrangements were speedily made to have the money sealed up by itself to be used as evidence, when the postmaster returned to the office.

Meanwhile Mr. Shallcross had been equally fortunate at Pittsburgh, having obtained a package of notes exchanged by Hinton at the bank of Sibbet and Jones, and which were also identified as a portion of the plunder captured on the night of the 22d. Thereupon he sent a second despatch to Mr. Haskell, informing him that he held conclusive proofs of the guilt of Hinton, and directing him to keep a close watch of the criminal till his arrival, but under no circumstances to make



"The astonishment of the robber was equalled only by his chagrin."

an arrest. He further stated that he should start that night for Cleveland.

The telegram was handed to Mr. Haskell shortly after his return to the post-office. Instead of acting in accordance with the instructions of the officer who had the case in charge and was responsible for its management, the postmaster, on consultation with McKinstry, went in person before a United States commissioner, and swore out a warrant for the arrest

of the General, who was apprehended the same evening. As he was well known in the city, the news spread rapidly and caused great excitement.

The astonishment of the robber was equalled only by his chagrin. For a long period having carried on an extensive scheme of depredations under the eyes of skillful detectives whose confidence he shared, he came at last to regard exposure as a remote contingency hardly to be considered in the calculation of chances. As yet he did not know that a new man had taken up the trail, or that steps rarely misled by false scents were pursuing him unseen. Thus far he saw only the clumsy hand of a postmaster, unpractised in the arts of detection, who had rashly ventured to turn aside from the legitimate sphere of duty, to trip an expert that had passed unscathed beneath the batteries of the most experienced officers in the land. He felt like a certain eminent physician that, at the age of threescore and ten, fell mortally ill of the measles. As the rigors of the last agony were approaching, he remarked, "I have nothing to fear, no regrets to express at being cut down at the height of my usefulness, but it is hard, hard, very hard, after facing death for half a century in all its forms, after passing many times unharmed through the plague and the pestilence, to perish at last of a baby disease."

Determined, if possible, not to be outwitted by a novice, the General exerted his ingenuity to circumvent his captor. With loud protestations of innocence, he denounced Haskell as an idiot, declaring that his days as postmaster at Cleveland were numbered, as he had influence enough at Washington to secure the removal of a dozen such fellows for the asking. To avoid sleeping in jail that night, he implored the commissioner to allow him time to consult with friends and to secure counsel, suggesting that he be permitted to remain till morning at the Weddell House, under charge of a proper guard. Meanwhile Haskell, having become really frightened at the bold front and rigorous threats of the accused, so far weak-

ened in resolution as to accede without opposition to the arrangement proposed. Hence, with the consent of the commissioner, it was agreed that McKinstry and Colonel Abbey, city marshal, should remain with the General through the night in one of the parlors of the hotel.

After supper the three gentlemen repaired to the apartment designated for the purpose on one of the upper floors. Hinton had seen much of the world, and in conversation could be forcible or entertaining at will. In the present emergency he exerted his powers to the utmost to obtain temporary ascendancy over the minds of his guardsmen, with the view of withdrawing their thoughts from the object of the meeting, and of encouraging a feeling of security. Protestations of innocence and threats of vengeance against the postmaster, were adroitly interlarded with anecdotes and personal reminiscences. At length the watchers grew sleepy and negligent, while the General at intervals paced the room diagonally for the apparent purpose of resting his limbs.

Seizing a favorable moment, he gave a sudden spring, pulled the key from the door, whirled through, and locking the room on the outside, placed the key in his pocket. The guardsmen recovered from the shock of surprise to find themselves prisoners. Hinton hurried noiselessly down stairs and escaped by one of the private entrances to the hotel.

Some seconds elapsed before McKinstry and Abbey could decide upon a plan of action. They then began to shout lus-



"The key is gone," replied Mike, the porter."

tily for the porter on watch below, who, after some delay, caught the sound of the tumult, and ran up stairs to inquire what was the matter.

"Let us out quick," replied McKinstry; "General Hinton has locked us in and escaped. Come, make haste."

"The key is gone," replied Mike, the porter.

"Hurry up and find another," answered the voice within.

Mike, having returned to the office for a master-key, liberated the guards thus unexpectedly metamorphosed into prisoners. It was between one and two o'clock in the morning. Without sitting down to chew the cud of mortification, they roused a few friends, and began to scour the city in search of the fugitive. Messengers were despatched in various directions, but they gradually returned bringing no tidings whatever of the runaway.

Shallcross arrived about noon from Pittsburgh. When informed that the postmaster, in violation of positive instructions, had assumed management of the case only to commit a series of blunders ending in the flight of the criminal, his wrath found expression in language more forcible than elegant. Through superserviceable zeal, poor Haskell had managed to draw upon his devoted head the fire of both friend and foe. Nor is there any one to whom a blunderer can go, under such circumstances, for consolation, as all are under strong temptation to join in the general censure, if for no other reason than to show their own superiority.

It is worthy of remark in passing, that whenever postmasters interfere with the work of special agents, in matters of detection and arrests, they almost invariably make a failure. If the thief is at all sharp, he not unfrequently proves a Tartar in the hands of his captor, causing a great deal more trouble than he receives. The department is often annoyed, and the ends of justice are often thwarted, by well-meant but pernicious intermeddling of this kind. Instead of acting on his own responsibility in such cases, it is the duty of postmasters to notify the proper officer at Washington, that an agent of

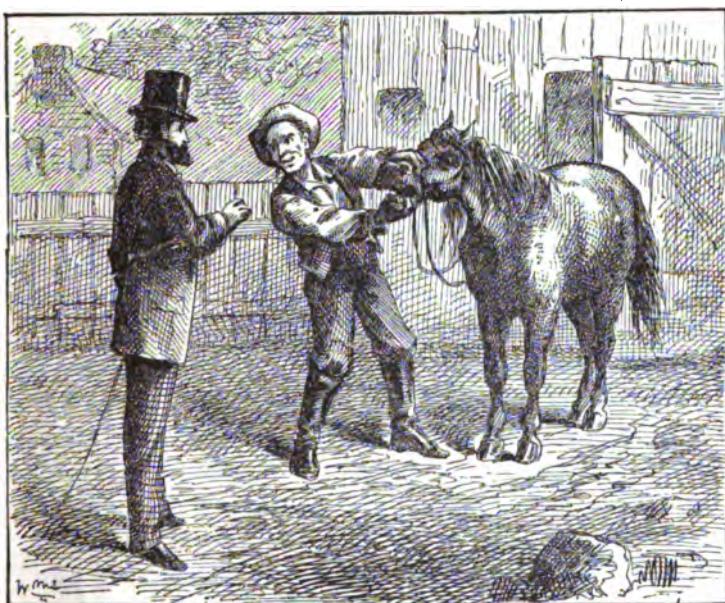
the requisite qualifications may be sent to attend properly to the business.

Having taken a hasty survey of the situation, Mr. Shallcross proceeded immediately to Columbus, traveling night and day, as he had done continuously for over two weeks, with nothing more comfortable than a seat or the floor of a coach to sleep on. In that city the Ohio Stage Company had its headquarters, J. H. Sullivan, Esq., being then president, and Oscar Ream, Esq., secretary. On the presentation of the facts by the special agent of the post-office department, those gentlemen at once issued orders to all the agents of the company to keep a strict lookout for Hinton, and to report promptly any information they might obtain concerning him. From Columbus, in company with Mr. Ream, Mr. Shallcross, drove to Delaware, Ohio, the home of Hinton, and made the necessary arrangements for his apprehension should he visit his family.

In the mean time the post-office department, having been fully advised of the situation, authorized Mr. Shallcross to offer a reward of one thousand dollars for the arrest of Hinton, and he accordingly scattered broadcast handbills containing a complete description of the fugitive, with the amount of the reward displayed in conspicuous type, well suited to open the optics, and put on the *qui vive* the "Buckeyes" of the period. Mr. Sullivan added, over his own signature, as president, strict instructions to all employés of the company to extend the fullest aid to the special agent in his efforts to effect a capture. For several days no news was heard of the robber from any quarter, and it seemed idle to speculate in regard to his movements. From the fact that Hinton was extensively known through the state, the detective reasoned that he would try to remain in concealment till the pursuit relaxed in vigor, and then make his way as best he could to some other part of the country.

On returning to Columbus, Mr. Shallcross found a telegram announcing that Hinton had been seen in the vicinity of Akron, Ohio, where he applied at a farm-house for food,

saying that he was very hungry, having eaten nothing for two days except green corn plucked from the fields beside the road. Thither the special agent started immediately, and learned from the farmer's wife that, after a voracious meal, the half-starved traveler left in the direction of Ravenna. Barely stopping to thank the lady for the information, the officer pushed on in hot pursuit. A few miles beyond he ascer-



"Unaccustomed to so much walking, he decided to buy a horse."

tained that a man answering to the description had recently passed, and that he had bought from an old gentleman in the vicinity a horse and equipments. From this person additional and highly important information was obtained. He still had the bills, eighty-five dollars, received in payment for the horse, and on examination they proved to be the identical notes contained in the letter mailed at Hillsborough, Ohio, the post-bill accompanying which, the detective at an earlier stage of the chase had found behind the fire-board of the

General's room in the hotel at Morristown. The gentleman was directed to retain the money, and not to part with it under any circumstances till authorized to do so.

In addition to the stolen bills, another discovery was made at this place. The seller of the horse stated that the purchaser arrived about noon, and represented himself to be an agent of a nursery firm engaged in selling trees. Unaccustomed to so much walking, he had become weary and foot-sore, and had accordingly decided to buy a horse, to facilitate his movements. After completing the bargain and taking dinner, the stranger remarked that he had a visit to pay to a gentleman in the neighborhood, but as the distance was considerable around by the road, he would take a short cut on foot across the lots, adding that he might not return before nightfall. He left in the direction of the place designated, and came back at dusk. He then partook of a hurried supper, and rode away.

Before the arrival of the special agent, the old gentleman whom the nursery agent had favored with his patronage learned from the farmer, upon whom the same individual proposed to call, that no such person had come near his place. Hence the detective inferred that the fugitive hoped to escape by traveling in the night and remaining in concealment through the day. On the afternoon of the purchase he probably stayed in an adjoining cornfield, with no other companionship than guilty memories and dismal forebodings.

The detective further concluded, from the direction of his flight, that he was hastening toward the river, hoping to find an asylum among the hills of Virginia and Western Pennsylvania, where few if any were familiar with his features.

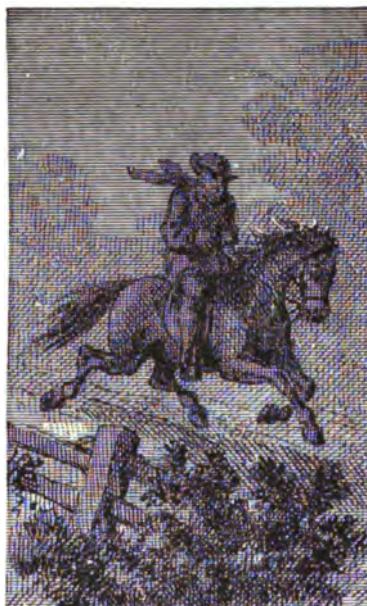
Changing horses at Ravenna, Mr. Shallcross continued the pursuit with unabated vigor, stopping at wide intervals long enough to partake of necessary food, but not thinking of rest while the object of the chase was still unaccomplished. A hint here and there, occasional and fragmentary, as the fugitive traveled mostly at night, satisfied the officer that Hinton

was aiming for the ford at Wellsville, in Columbiana County, and toward that point accordingly he hastened.

Arriving about midnight at a small hamlet a few miles from New Lisbon, the special agent learned that early on the morning of the same day a stranger, who from the description could be no other than Hinton, had ridden up to the door and asked for breakfast. When the meal was over, the gentleman remarked that he had business to transact in the neighborhood which would probably consume the day, and requested the privilege of leaving his horse in the stable. He then went away on foot, but returned at twilight, paid his bill, and rode off. This circumstance fully confirmed the theory already formed in reference to the method of travel pursued by the fugitive.

It was now definitely known that the robber was only four hours in advance of the officer, who urged on his jaded horse with renewed zeal, in the effort to overtake him, if possible, before he should succeed in crossing the Ohio. Having no longer a doubt that he would attempt to ford the stream at Wellsville, the intuitions of the detective, originating in the scanty information possessed as far back as at Ravenna, amounting almost to foreknowledge, he aimed directly for that point.

Hinton, it was well known, was entirely familiar with the route, having often passed over it as general manager of the stage company, so that there was no reasonable hope that he might be detained by missing the way.



"In the gathering gloom only the nearest objects were visible."

As the special agent approached the river, he entered a bank of fog, which grew more dense and dismal as he advanced, till in the gathering gloom only the nearest objects were visible. Fences, houses, trees, were successively lost to sight, till at last he was compelled to trust entirely to the instincts of the horse for pilotage.

Meanwhile Hinton was pursuing his solitary journey under equal disadvantages. About two o'clock in the morning he passed through the familiar streets of Wellsville, having little need to use caution now, for the village was buried in darkness and sleep. A few moments later and the waters of the river were rolling in mystery before him.

Should he go on alone or seek aid? By daylight, or even in an ordinary night, a person familiar with the ground could here ford the stream, at seasons of low water, without peril, as a bar extends from the Ohio side in a north-easterly direction, midway into the river, and there intersects with another, reaching out in a north-westerly line from the opposite bank. Though the rider had often crossed at this point, the horse was a stranger to the locality, and in a night like the present a horse that knew the ford could be trusted with much more confidence than a man.

Weary in body and tortured in mind, the robber did not stop to count the chances. Behind, earth and air swarmed with dangers; ahead, beyond that veil of mist, as he delusively imagined, lay peace and safety. In a few hours it might be too late. Into the stream, accordingly, he urged the horse,

“Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.”

Cautiously feeling his way along the bar, Hinton advanced several rods without accident, but before reaching the point of intersection lost his bearings, and guided the animal into

deep water. For a few seconds he drifted passively at the mercy of the current, and then, waking to a realization of the danger, struggled frantically to regain the ford. The heavy weight of the rider pressed the horse beneath the surface, when throwing out his arms in sudden fright, he lost his seat in the saddle, and became separated from the beast. It was an appalling crisis. Dread of capture, stronger than the fear



"Guided by the splashing in the water, he turned the skiff down stream, and in a few seconds came upon the half-drowned man."

of death, deterred the robber from shouting for help. Besides, at that hour of the night, what would outcries avail? Sleep and silence, deep as the blackness that hung over the river, seemed to hold both man and nature in chains. From what quarter could aid penetrate the gloom? Then, in the moment of supreme despair, the wretch remembered the happiness of innocent though humble childhood, and passed in swift review the career of vice and crime that had dragged him down from

seats of honor to perish alone, pursued by avenging furies. Conscience declared that the surrounding darkness, so black and hopeless, was a fitting pall to hide from sight the close of such a life.

The noise, however, attracted the attention of the boat-watchman who slept at the landing.

Without waiting to deliberate, for he knew some one was in trouble, he sprang up, lit a reflecting lantern, jumped into a skiff, and pushed out into the stream. Near the bank he met the riderless horse retracing its steps along the bar. Guided by the splashing in the water, he turned the skiff down stream, and in a few seconds came upon the half-drowned man, who, amid all the terrors of the situation, dared not call for aid. The rescue was not yet complete, for it required great and skillful efforts to draw him into the boat, which, however, was at length accomplished, when the watchman rowed back to the Ohio side. On the way Hinton fabricated a story which entirely satisfied the Good Samaritan whose prompt action had saved him from death.

Hinton knew every one at Wellsville, for this was an important stage stand. It would not answer to be seen near the village by daylight, and the river could not be crossed, under the circumstances, in the fog. The only alternative presented to the mind of the fugitive was to obtain somewhere a supply of food, and seek shelter in the forests of the neighborhood, while waiting for a more favorable night for fording the stream.

Thanking the boatman, and remounting the horse which had considerately come to a stand near the landing, Hinton rode slowly toward the hotel of the town, revolving plans for the future on the way. With the building and its environments he was perfectly familiar, having often shared its good cheer. Tying the animal under a shed in the rear, he walked up to the back L to reconnoitre. Utter stillness prevailed. Gently trying a window of the kitchen, he found it unfastened. Before proceeding further, he pulled off his boots, which were

filled with water, turning them sole upward against the steps to drain.

Chilled by the long immersion, shivering with cold and dread, the homeless wanderer paused a moment irresolutely, undecided whether to raid on the well-stocked pantry of the inn, or to ride away unfurnished with supplies. During his flight, however, he had suffered too much from hunger to risk a repetition of the evil. Silently raising the window, he thrust in his head and body, and cautiously stretched out his foot toward the floor. The dripping stocking fell on the face of Caspar, the hostler, who was sleeping on a blanket directly beneath the window. Visions of burglars and midnight assassination did not frighten away the wits of the Teuton. Spitting out the unsavory waters of the Ohio, he grasped the nether extremity of the intruder, exclaiming, "Py tam, vot is dish?"

Hinton made a brief and desperate, but unavailing effort to escape, for the German was much the stronger of the two.

"Mine Got! murter! heelp! heelp! queek! I'm got heem," yelled Caspar, awaking the night with strange imprecations.

"Hush! hush!" whispered the prisoner. "I am no thief. I'm an old friend — hungry — that stopped to get food without disturbing the house. Please keep quiet, and let me go."

"Meester Heenton, ees it you?" ejaculated Caspar, recognizing the voice.

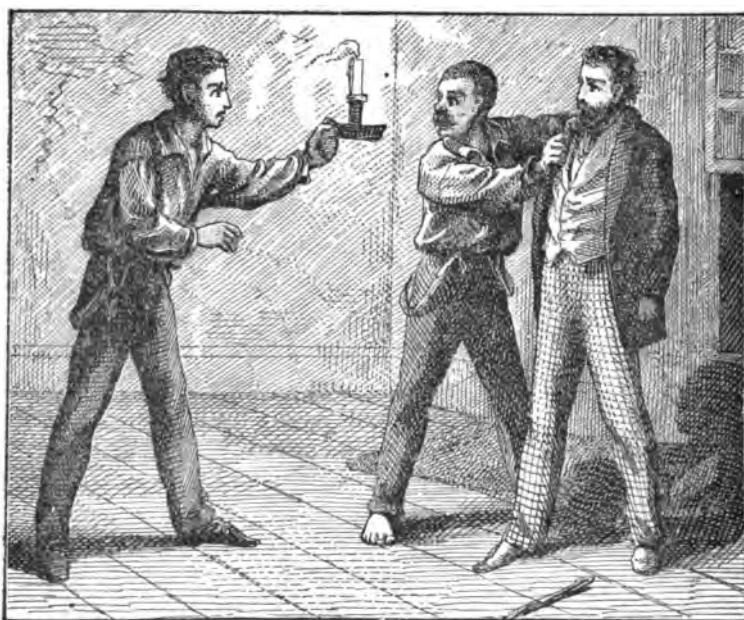
"Let me go and I'll make you rich, — the richest man in Wellsville," pleaded the prisoner.

"No yer don't — no yer don't, Meester Heenton; I knows eet all. Yer puts yer fut een eet dis time, dat ishso," and the hostler again waked the echoes with calls for aid.

In a few minutes Mr. Ben Way, proprietor of the establishment, appeared with a light, when, to the captor thus reinforced, the prisoner offered no further resistance.

While the above incidents were happening, the special agent of the post-office department was approaching the vil-

lage as speedily as circumstances would permit. It was about half past three in the morning, when, attracted by the light, he stopped at the door of the hotel and knocked for admittance. The summons was answered by the landlord in person. Upon entering the room, the astonishment of the officer was only equalled by his delight as he saw the robber whom he had suspected so long and hunted so vigorously, a prisoner in the hands of the herculean hostler.



"No yer don't, — no yer don't, Meester Heenton. . . . Yer puts yer fut een eet dis time, dat iahso."

The situation was soon explained to the special agent, who directed, as a matter of greater security, that Hinton should be put in irons, and drawing a pair of handcuffs from his pocket, he caused these useful ornaments to be clasped around the wrists of the captive.

Having arranged with Mr. Way and the deputy sheriff of Columbiana County to take the prisoner to Cleveland, Mr.

Shallcross lost no time in looking up the witnesses, going to Wheeling, Morristown, Zanesville, Hillsborough, and other places along the National Road, then the great highway between the east and the west. Among the parties summoned were George W. Clutter, chief clerk in the Wheeling post-office, Moses Wheeler, banker of Zanesville, several of the drivers with whom Hinton had traveled while depredating on the mails, the citizen of Hillsborough who sent the letter containing the money afterward paid through the hands of the thief for the horse purchased near Akron, and others whose testimony was deemed important.

On the 10th of September the special agent, with the witnesses, arrived in Cleveland, and the next day the examination before the United States commissioner began, and continued without intermission till the 14th, when the accused was held for trial on four separate charges, and required to give bail in the sum of fifteen thousand dollars. As no one in that city was willing to risk so much on his appearance at the appointed time, the General was remanded to jail for the night.

On the 15th, Mr. Shallcross and General G. A. Jones, United States marshal for the district of Ohio, started for Columbus, having the prisoner in custody, and arrived the next afternoon. As the party drove through the suburbs, Hinton remarked, "I am the person who carried the first mail ever brought into Columbus, when a poor and almost friendless boy."

The prisoner was lodged in jail to await trial at the fall term of the United States circuit court, before Hon. Justice John McLean, a former postmaster-general. Hon. Henry Stanberry, afterwards attorney-general under President Johnson, was to conduct the prosecution. When postmaster-general, Justice McLean drafted the statute under which the indictments in the present case were to be found.

After the grand jury had presented a true bill and the prisoner had been arraigned, on motion of counsel the trial was

postponed until the next term of the court, and the bail reduced to ten thousand dollars. This was on the 15th of October. On the 17th of the following January, several friends of the defendant entered into the required recognizance, when he was discharged from custody.

At the April term the accused failed to appear, when the court ordered the recognizance to be forfeited. All efforts of the sureties to have the order revoked and the forfeiture respite till the October term proved unavailing, so that the friends of the robber were compelled to pay dearly for their confidence in his treacherous promises.

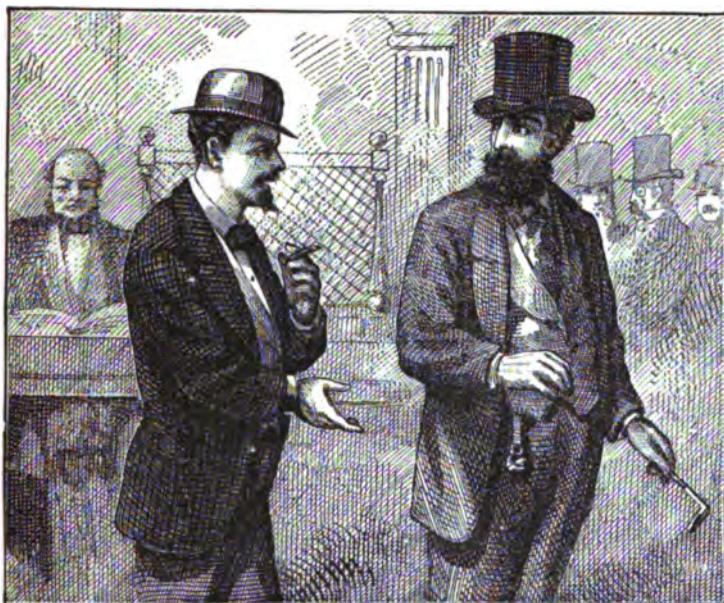
Shortly after his release on bail, Hinton departed from Columbus, and for several weeks no tidings came from him. Early in April, however, a letter was received from him by one of the bondsmen, in which he wrote, "I have not the heart to appear for trial, and before this reaches you, the turbulent waters of the angry Mississippi will be rolling over my dead body." The writer gave sundry directions in regard to his affairs, and made one or two trifling requests of the friends who had stood by him in trouble.

The missive, adroitly contrived to mislead, satisfied some that the fugitive had really committed suicide ; but Mr. Shallcross, whose experience and habits of mental analysis enabled him to see readily through the artifice, became convinced that instead of a watery grave the robber was seeking, by way of the Mississippi, an escape from the country to Mexico or Cuba. He accordingly embarked on the "Father of Waters" in the month of May, and arrived at New Orleans the 1st of June. Being well acquainted with the chirography of Hinton, he naturally looked to the registers of the various hotels for tokens of his presence. Beginning at the St. Charles, and running back through the record, he soon found the name of "O. H. Hall," in the irregular, rigid, and perfectly familiar hand of the man whom he was hunting.

The St. Charles was then kept by Hall and Hildreth. Calling the attention of the former to the name on the regis-

ter, the detective inquired whether the gentleman was a relative or acquaintance. The proprietor replied that he remembered the man, but had no personal acquaintance with him, adding, further, that he left the hotel abruptly some weeks before.

Having discovered the *alias* of the fugitive, the officer sauntered out, to devise at leisure new plans for continuing the chase, when he fortunately met an old acquaintance, Mr.



"Did you know that he was under arrest for robbing the mails?" asked the officer."

Wilson Dales, a steamboat agent, and formerly a steamboat clerk, in which capacity he had traveled upon the Mississippi and Ohio till he knew almost every one of any prominence in the valleys of both rivers. The first exclamation of Dales was, "Why, Shallcross, whom on earth are you after away down here?"

The detective was delighted to meet the gentleman, and

after conversing for a few minutes on indifferent topics by way of preparation, inquired, "Do you know General Otho Hinton, of Columbus, Ohio?"

"Yes," replied Dales; "I saw him a few weeks ago at the St. Charles, and spoke to him, but he refused to recognize me or acknowledge the acquaintanceship. His conduct struck me as very strange, for I was sure that I could not be mistaken. He left the house soon after, and I have not seen or heard of him since."

"Did you know that he was under arrest for robbing the mails?" asked the officer.

"Yes," answered the steamboat agent; "I read something about it in the papers, and was under the impression that he had probably broken jail, and was trying to elude pursuit. I mentioned the matter to one of the hotel proprietors, who said that my recognition of the man had cost them a customer, as he left immediately afterwards."

The special agent then visited the other hotels *seriatim*, and found upon the register of the St. Louis the name of "O. H. Hitchcock" in the ill-disguised writing of Hinton. Employed here as porters were a wide-awake Irishman and good-natured negro, whose favorable consideration the officer soon won by judicious attentions. Both were questioned in reference to "Hitchcock," whose striking appearance could easily be described and was likely to be remembered. Both recollect the man, but neither could tell at first the direction of his departure. The Irishman thought he took passage for Mobile, while the negro was equally confident that he left by an up-river boat. On more mature reflection, however, aided by sundry suggestions from the special agent, the negro gradually recalled the circumstances, and declared that the gentleman sailed on the steamer "Falcon," for Cuba.

A day or two later the Falcon returned to New Orleans, when Mr. Shallcross learned from the purser that a person answering exactly to the description of Hinton, though traveling under a different name, had taken passage on the outward

trip, and was then in Havana. Aware that no extradition treaty existed between the United States and Spanish governments, whereby a fugitive from justice could be demanded of the Cuban authorities, the officer here desisted from further pursuit, notifying the department by mail of the continued existence and present refuge of the escaped robber.

Other matters arose to engross the attention of the special agent, and though anxious to resume the trail, he waited sev-



"The negro gradually recalled the circumstances."

eral months before finding a suitable opportunity. In February, 1852, while engaged in the investigation of certain cases in the vicinity of Charleston, S. C., he improved an interval of comparative leisure to make a trip to Havana on the steamer Isabel, which then plied regularly between the two ports. On landing, the detective adopted a disguise, and made the rounds of the city in search of the exile. The hunt was thorough, and was rewarded with success. Hinton had be-

come the proprietor of a tobacco store, and employed a number of hands in the manufacture of cigars. Satisfied that his disguise would prevent recognition, the officer did not hesitate to enter the establishment and engage the owner in conversation, making inquiries in regard to certain brands of cigars, and intimating a desire to purchase quite a large quantity before the sailing of the Isabel for the States, provided prices



"The dealer had no suspicion whatever of the identity of the proposed customer."

could be made satisfactory. The dealer having no suspicion whatever of the identity of the proposed customer, entered into the negotiation without the slightest constraint.

The last twelve months had made noticeable changes in the appearance of the fugitive. During the period his hair had turned gray, and the lustre had faded from his eyes. The figure, then erect, had become stooping, and the step, then firm and resolute, had given place to a timorous, temporizing

shuffle. It was like the change produced by a sudden stroke of paralysis at a time of high health. Yet it was evident that "the turbulent waters of the angry Mississippi" had never rolled over the dead body of the robber. The threat of suicide was, doubtless, intended as a blind; and a clumsy one it proved, revealing to the detective the very purpose it was designed to cover.

Having matured a plan, the officer called upon Mr. Campbell, United States consul at Havana, to consult in reference to the possibility or expediency of securing the person of the criminal. That gentleman promptly took the ground that, as no extradition treaty existed between the American and Spanish governments, Hinton could not be compelled to return, and that any attempt to accomplish this object by force or artifice would result in disagreeable complications between the two powers, and hence could not for a moment be countenanced. In case such a plan was seriously entertained in any quarter, it would become his duty, as the representative of the United States, to interpose actively for the protection of the fugitive.

With the facilities at his command, the special agent could easily have decoyed Hinton on board the steamer, and taken him home a prisoner, but acting on the advice of the consul, and also on his own better judgment, he determined to abandon the enterprise, and accordingly returned to Charleston.

On the return voyage, the officer arranged with the purser of the Isabel to visit Hinton's establishment every trip, and to notify him at once of any changes or other unusual movements.

Not many months later a formidable insurrection broke out in Cuba, attended with a feeling of general disquiet and uncertainty. Rumors were ripe that the island was about to be ceded to the United States. During the excitement, Hinton sold out his interests, and left for parts unknown. The facts were promptly reported to Mr. Shallcross by the purser of the Isabel. For a time nothing whatever was heard of the fugitive, but the detective kept the matter in mind, and as a

reward for his perseverance succeeded in locating him on the Columbia River, in Oregon, where he was engaged in keeping a hotel and running a ferry.

This information was communicated through the post-office department to the United States district attorney, at Columbus, Ohio. Measures were promptly taken to effect the capture of Hinton, the necessary papers, at the earnest solicitation of the bondsmen, who were anxious, if possible, to recover the ten thousand dollars lost through his treachery, being placed in the hands of one Mills, who was specially deputized to make the arrest. The selection proved exceedingly unfortunate. Armed with authority to execute an important trust, for which his indiscretion and lack of judgment totally unfitted him, the deputy started for the Pacific slope, with loud boasts that he would soon return with Hinton a prisoner. So pervasive and full was the determination, that it bubbled over on all occasions, Mills losing no opportunity to tell who he was and to explain the object of his mission. As might have been foreseen, the news of his approach preceded him; and on arriving at the Columbia River, he found that the hotel and ferry had passed into the hands of another owner, and that the late proprietor had vanished as suddenly as he came.

Forewarned of the approaching danger, Hinton hastily disposed of his property in Oregon, and fled to the Sandwich Islands. At that time there was no extradition treaty between the American and Hawaiian governments, so that the exile seemed to be safe from further pursuit. Soon after, however, Mr. Squires, our consul at Honolulu, attempted to open negotiations for the annexation of the Sandwich Islands to the United States. The project so alarmed Hinton that he lost no time in sailing for Australia, where definite trace of him was soon lost.

He is believed to have led an obscure and wretched life, dreading to meet men, if not dreaded by them. A few years later, death terminated the earthly miseries of the exile, and his remains were borne to the grave by strangers.

BREAKING IN.



The Lonely Ride.

A

N exceedingly small percentage of the men, commissioned from time to time as special agents of the post-office department, grow into efficient and valuable officers. To all positions controlled more or less by political influences many unfit applicants gain admission by virtue of strong connections and stronger importunities. Where the duties are simple and run in the beaten ruts of routine, they may accomplish the prescribed term of service without proving noticeable failures. Others, more able and earnest, furnish the power to drive the machinery,

while they attend with passable intelligence to the minor details.

But the work of a special agent is peculiar and difficult, comparatively few possessing the qualities which enable them

to achieve in it even a tolerable degree of success. Men eminently fitted to shine in the pulpit, at the bar, or on the bench, might fail lamentably in efforts to gather up and interpret the clues that lead through labyrinthine windings to the secrets hidden in the mind of the wily criminal. In addition to a kind of clairvoyant insight into the operations of a guilty soul, a master in the art of detection must possess a keenness of attention that permits nothing, however minute, to escape its observation, a sagacity in construing the meaning of facts that rarely blunders, a resolution that never falters, a perseverance that never tires, and often a courage that triumphs over dangers by a quality of transcendent heroism.

A character so well furnished with the essential attributes of a detective usually finds more congenial and remunerative employment. Many who seek the places with most unreasonable urgency, and with the most formidable array of indorsements, are persons that have fallen to the ground in the battle of life, unable to maintain a foothold under a system of free competition. If successful in securing admission to the ranks, they soon discover their incapacity, and, conscious of total unfitness for the work, bend their available energies to the task of clinging as long as possible to the emoluments of the office. Gradually they drop off from sheer lack of strength to hold on longer. Prior to the recent great improvement in the *personnel* of the force, a few agents of rare gifts and great experience actually performed nine-tenths of the important labor.

This chapter will contain a sketch of the early efforts, discouragements, and triumphs of one of the most remarkable men who have ever done good and valiant service for the post-office department—Mr. John B. Furay, of Omaha, Nebraska. His labors, almost herculean both in hardship and achievement, have been confined to the frontier, several of the most important arrests effected by him having been made on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

His method of procedure is somewhat peculiar, as in many

instances, after clearing away every doubt from his own mind, he relies with what would seem to be the most audacious self-assurance on making the evidence for conviction out of the criminal himself.

Mr. Furay was appointed special agent of the post-office department in August, 1870. For the first few months his efforts, though untiring, were misdirected and unsatisfactory. In describing the situation, he writes: "When I was new and green I acted timidly, and I should always have acted so, as I feel, had my good fortune not thrown me with Colonel Fred W. Schaurte in the spring of 1871. I have often looked back at some of the old cases turned over to me by my predecessor, and have felt ashamed of how I threw them away through pure greenness and timidity. But I went down to St. Louis under orders to work with Colonel Schaurte for ninety days, and from him I learned how it was done."

Prior to this short but exceedingly profitable apprenticeship to Colonel Schaurte, he groped in the dark, playing the game of blindman's-buff with eyes bandaged, and caught no one. To use his own words: "Although I had plenty of opportunity, a perfect surfeit of good cases, and my district full of good thieves as active and saucy as mosquitoes, and although I worked hard enough, — did too much, in fact, — still I could not capture anybody. I could figure down pretty generally who it was, but I could not get the evidence on them. I found that the thieves in those days, where they stole from the mails, made it a specialty to cover up their tracks as well as possible, and I was disposed to regard that the problem of how to capture them was one that could not possibly be solved."

Colonel Schaurte received the novice with characteristic urbanity and kindness, reviewing critically the several barren investigations that made up the record of the few previous months, and pointing out the causes of failure. Having explained the theory of success, he placed in the hands of Mr.

Furay the papers relating to the loss at different times of about fifty registered packages, on the route between Ironton, Missouri, and Pocahontas, Arkansas,—Ironton being then the southern terminus of the line of railway which has since been extended to Houston, Texas. Proceeding to Ironton *incognito*, the anxious learner procured a good saddle-horse, and made the entire trip, the distance being about one hundred and thirty miles each way. It was during the season of the spring freshets, and it rained continuously. Many of the streams could only be crossed by swimming the horse, as they were heavily swollen and without bridges.

The regulations of the department require each post-office to keep a record of all registered packages passing through it. The transit sheet provides blank spaces for a full description of each package, and for the dates of its arrival and departure. As an additional security, adjoining offices are also required to exchange receipts for the same. If a dishonest postmaster purloins a letter, he may claim that he sent it forward in due course of mail, and the issue is narrowed to a question of veracity between him and the office that failed to receive it.

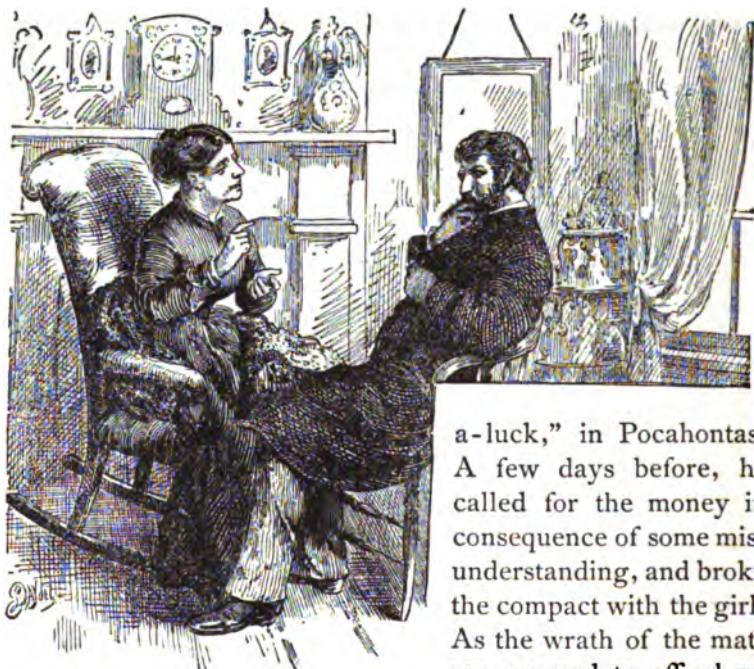
The special agent discovered that only one or two of the many offices between Ironton and Pocahontas pretended to keep any record whatever of registered matter, and at these the work was very imperfectly done. Similar neglect prevailed in regard to the interchange of receipts. Owing to the disregard of the instructions of the department, no record existed to indicate at what locality on the long route the letters disappeared.

The scholar returned to St. Louis from the land of floods to report progress. With words of kindly encouragement, he was advised to repeat the trip, and to scrutinize every point closely. On the second expedition he discovered that the mail-pouches in use were badly worn, and telegraphed to St. Louis for a supply of new ones, which were promptly furnished. Having accomplished so much he reported again at

headquarters, badly discouraged at the slow and barren progress of the hunt. He was advised to go back a third time with the special view of locating the losses, as about the only fact thus far developed was the disagreeable one that the letters went in at one end and failed to come out at the other, a hundred and thirty miles away.

The third expedition proved much more fruitful than its predecessors. The mail was carried on horseback. On reaching the route, the agent learned that the losses ceased abruptly with the introduction of the new pouches. This indicated that the robberies were committed by one of the riders, as postmasters having access to the entire mail could steal as well with new pouches as with old ones. He further learned that one of the riders had lately quit the business, leaving two younger brothers to perform the work, the three having been previously employed to "ride mail," as it is called in that country, by their father, a sub-contractor on a part of the route. Yet the theory that the depredations were committed by one of the riders failed to explain the facts, for in several instances packages going in the same direction were stolen on two consecutive days from the custody of different brothers. However, the special agent decided to investigate the family, and accordingly proceeded to a settlement on the Big Black River, near which Benjamin, the eldest of the three, was then at work. In a short time he heard all the gossip of the neighborhood, and among the rest that Ben had lately quarrelled with a young woman to whom he had been engaged. In commenting on the situation, an unsuspecting neighbor observed, "the gal is a fool for it, as Ben is right peart, and for a young man has saved up a right smart chance of money, as I have heern tell."

The officer then paid his respects to the mother of the maiden whose affections were supposed to have soured into hate. After a long skirmish, the old lady admitted that for several months her daughter had held for Ben two one-hundred-dollar bills, which he claimed to have won at "chuck-



"After a long skirmish, the old lady admitted that for several months her daughter had held for Ben two one-hundred-dollar bills."

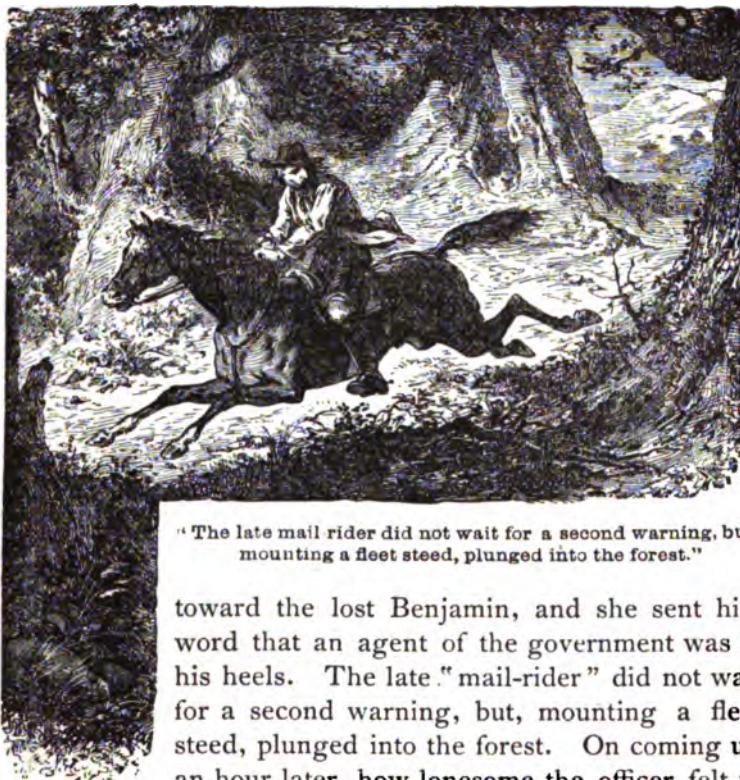
revealed his official character and the object of his visit. This act of confidence he soon had occasion to record as "blunder number one."

Having read in the Constitution that no person was to be deprived of liberty without "due process of law," the officer galloped to the house of a "squire," seven miles distant, for the purpose of filing an information and procuring a warrant. The caution observed in approaching the suspected criminal he also set down as "blunder number two," and learned to act thenceforward, in dealing with robbers, with the most decisive promptitude.

From time immemorial, mothers-in-law have been unmercifully pelted with witless jests and pointless sneers; but, in this

a-luck," in Pocahontas. A few days before, he called for the money in consequence of some misunderstanding, and broke the compact with the girl. As the wrath of the matron seemed to afford an ample pledge of fidelity, the agent, after enjoining the most solemn secrecy,

instance, during the brief absence of the officer, the heart of the rejected candidate for that endearing relationship warmed



"The late mail rider did not wait for a second warning, but, mounting a fleet steed, plunged into the forest."

toward the lost Benjamin, and she sent him word that an agent of the government was at his heels. The late "mail-rider" did not wait for a second warning, but, mounting a fleet steed, plunged into the forest. On coming up an hour later, how lonesome the officer felt to be deprived of the companionship of the one whom he had sought so long and so far! How he cursed the vain, misleading philosophy of the poet who sang, —

"Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned,
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned!"

Too late he discovered that the "process of law" came in at the wrong time and in the wrong place.

However, without wasting a moment in idle regrets, he hurried to Cane Creek, ten miles distant, and there procured the pilotage of the postmaster, who knew the forests thor-

oughly. The two rode the entire night, changing horses three times. As they cantered along, discussing the robberies, the postmaster recalled a particular week when Ben was not on the route, yet, as shown by the papers, several losses occurred during the time. Hence he could not be the only thief. There must be another, and the question of paramount importance was to determine who. Could it be one of the other brothers? The family-tree had an unsavory reputation. Was it true that all the fruit was equally bad?

At nine o'clock in the morning, after making a circuit of many miles in luckless pursuit of the eldest brother, the equestrians debouched on the main highway, and sauntered leisurely along to meet the approaching rider, who proved to be the youngest of the ill-starred trio. Without uttering a word, the officer seized the bridle of the horse, and, having led it a short distance to one side, pulled out a pair of handcuffs and ordered the lad to dismount. The boy slid to the ground, half demented from fright.

"Do you know who I am?" inquired the special agent, coolly unlocking the shackles.

"No, sir," was the trembling response. *

"Have you ever heard of a detective?" continued the officer, severely.

"Yes, sir, I reckon I have."

"Did you ever see one?"

"No-o-o, I reckon not."

"Then look at me," said the fierce stranger; "I am the great detective of America. No mail-robber ever gets away from me. Now, my boy, you have been robbing the mails. I know it; you know it; in a little while everybody will know it. What did you do with the packages?"

The boy was about to stammer forth a denial, when the officer broke in, "Come, hush, don't lie to me! You might deceive some people, but remember I am a detective. Don't you know a detective can see right through you? What, I say, did you do with the packages? Quick, don't lie again!"

The terrified delinquent tried to fall back a little as if to gain a moment for reflection, but the officer, bending over him with an eye so fierce and searching that its boasted power seemed to do scant justice to the reality, continued, with overwhelming precipitancy, "Come, quick, there's not a minute to be lost!"



"No mail robber ever gets away from me. Now, my boy, you have been robbing the mails."

"Well," said the lad, cowering under that pair of terrible orbs, "I'll — I'll tell the truth. I burned the most of them."

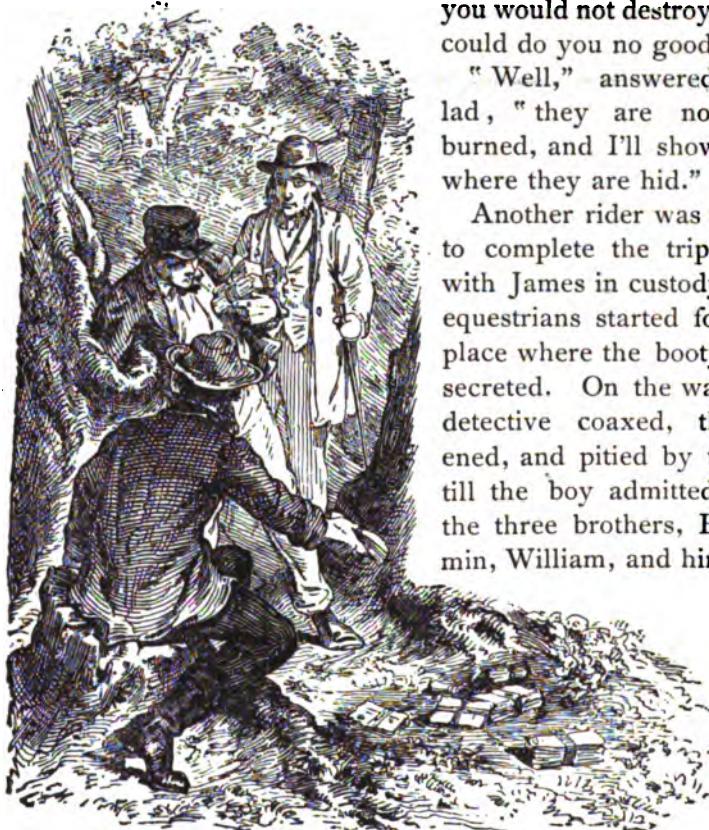
With him the fight was over, and resistance at an end. The agent immediately dropped the air of severity, and took the

opposite tack. "O, James," he resumed, "how sorry I am that you burned them! A good many of them contained papers which you could not use, but which are very valuable to the poor people who sent them. For their sake I hoped

you would not destroy what could do you no good."

"Well," answered the lad, "they are not all burned, and I'll show you where they are hid."

Another rider was found to complete the trip, and with James in custody, the equestrians started for the place where the booty was secreted. On the way the detective coaxed, threatened, and pitied by turns, till the boy admitted that the three brothers, Benjamin, William, and himself,



"The rifled packages, hidden in hollow trees and under old stumps, were scattered along the road for the distance of thirty-five miles."

were all engaged in the robberies. The rifled packages, hidden in hollow trees and under old stumps, were scattered along the road for the distance of thirty-five miles, the thief pointing out the places of concealment.

Having accomplished so much, they turned back to cap-

ture William, who was approaching from the south. When charged with the crime, he at first denied it stoutly; but James, having already divulged the guilty secret, advised his brother to follow the good example; and beset thus on both sides, the culprit held out but a few moments. Having eased his conscience by confession, William, in turn, conducted the party to a mausoleum of stolen treasures appropriated to his individual use, where he also resurrected a number of rifled packages.

As the mail was carried on horseback, the thieves had contrived to keep a hole on the inner side of each pouch, partially concealed by the folds, which was sewed up with a "whang" of leather. The nip would not be noticed except on close examination, and even then, as it appeared to be securely closed, would hardly attract attention.

At dark the motley company reached Cane Creek, the special agent having been in the saddle for thirty-six consecutive hours. Leaving the prisoners in charge of a guard, and procuring a change of horses, he pressed on twenty-one miles further, to the house of an uncle of the boys, in quest of the eldest brother who had most of the stolen property. The fugitive, however, was not there or in the neighborhood, but had fled across the country toward the southwest, with a start of twenty-four hours. Seeing the futility of prolonging the chase, he set out to return to Cane Creek the same night, but, overpowered by fatigue, dropped asleep on the road, and fell from the horse. He did not attempt to proceed further, but making a bed under a stack of straw, slept till morning.

Benjamin succeeded in effecting his escape. The other two brothers were taken to Ironton before a United States commissioner, who bound them over for trial. They were promptly indicted, and, when arraigned, pleaded guilty. As neither could read or write, they were sentenced to a term of three years in the House of Refuge. At the end of eighteen months, William ran away; and six months later, James followed his example. At the latest accounts the three brothers



"William, in turn, conducted the party to a mansoleum of stolen treasures."

were living in a state of outlawry in a remote part of Texas, the terror and scourge of the country for many miles around.

The successful issue of this case cured the timidity of the novice, causing him to rely with absolute self-confidence upon the extent and fertility of his own resources in subsequent efforts to rid the service of criminals. Before the expiration of the one hundred days of apprenticeship, he made three other arrests, though neither of the cases presented any features of marked interest.

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In the fall of 1871, Mr. Furay was directed to go to Kansas to assist temporarily the special agent in that state. Among the papers placed in his hands for investigation were those relating to the loss of two registered packages forwarded from St. Louis on the 2d and 5th of December, 1870, and directed respectively to Elk City and Elk Falls, Kansas. From Humboldt, the railroad town through which both those offices received their mails from the outside world, the two packages were sent westward on the 7th, and reached Eureka, fifty-five miles distant, the same day. At that time, through some confusion in the reorganization of routes, the offices, both at Elk Falls and Elk City, were left without supply. On the 22d of December, the packages were forwarded from Eureka to New Albany in the direction of their destination, and the postmaster at that point, having no established communication with either office, returned them to the railroad, so that, after a circuit of over one hundred miles through the interior, they reached Humboldt the second time on the 27th. On the 29th the packages were again dispatched to Eureka.

Whenever registered letters are lost, and the records are properly kept, the department, by means of "tracers," can determine where they disappear. Each office through which the missing package passed is required to indorse on the tracer the dates of its arrival and departure, and to give the name and official description of the party whose receipt is held for it.

As both packages failed to reach the offices of destination, half a dozen tracers were sent out during the next few months. Most of them were suppressed somewhere on the route. After long delay and many inquiries, two finally completed the circuit, and were returned to the special agent, but contributed little toward the elucidation of the subject. From Humboldt to Eureka they followed the packages on the second trip, or the one made December 29th. The office at Eureka claimed to have sent them on by the next mail, and to hold the receipt of the postmaster at New Albany; but the latter persisted in going back to the record of the first trip, and in replying to

all interrogatories with the answer that they passed through his hands on the 22d.

In September, eight months after the occurrence of the losses, Mr. Furay set out on a tour over the several routes, with the view of ascertaining, if possible, who was the thief. Reaching Eureka on the evening of the 11th, he proceeded to examine the records, and make a critical survey of the situation. The postmaster, who was also the editor of the



"Here is but one," remarked the agent. "I must have the other also."

village newspaper, left the management of the office almost exclusively to an assistant named Smythe, in whom he reposed unbounded confidence.

According to the transit sheet, the lost packages left Eureka December 22d, and again on the 2d of January,—in the latter

instance with three others for Elk Falls, which had arrived during the interim. The special agent then called for the receipts from the postmaster at New Albany. Of course there should have been two of these, one dated December 22d, for two packages, and the other dated January 2d, for five. A receipt for the five, dated December 29th, was promptly produced, when the assistant postmaster paused in his labors. "Here is but one," remarked the agent. "I must have the other also."

Smythe, who laid his hand upon the first without hesitating an instant, and who was evidently methodical and careful in the arrangement of papers, began to search for the missing document, but his cold, evasive, yet systematic manner of doing so at once satisfied the detective that he did not intend to find it. As the receipt already exhibited traced the lost letters out of the office on their second round, it was not apparent at first how the disappearance of its mate could benefit the assistant. After hunting a while, he remarked, "I can't find it. I had them both on each of the visits of the other special agent, and presume he must have wrapped it up with the papers."

"We will see," said Mr. Furay, to whom every scrap relating to the losses had been transferred. He examined the entire bundle then and there, but the receipt was not in it.

"It is strange," continued the young man, reflectively. "I can't for my life imagine where it has gone to."

The correctness of the intuition of the detective, based wholly on the manner of the assistant, conferred an interest on that scrap of paper to which it did not seem to be intrinsically entitled. His curiosity was stimulated to follow the lead further, in the vague hope that the clue might guide the way to important discoveries. Accordingly, with an air of indifference that very falsely translated his real eagerness and anxiety, he picked up the receipt with the careless remark that he would file it with the other papers.

It was now nearly dark, and the special agent went to the

hotel for supper. Hurrying through the meal, he called for lights, and repaired to his own room to study the mysterious connection between an apparently insignificant scrap of manuscript and the peculiar manner of the assistant postmaster.



"Hurrying through the meal, he repaired to his own room, to study an apparently insignificant scrap of manuscript."

Bending over the writing, he soon discovered that the "9," in the date "December 29," had been raised from a 2, the job being executed with a degree of care and precision which clearly indicated that the operator was a rascal of no ordinary

accomplishments. Close inspection also showed that, though the chirography was the same, the description of the three latest packages for Elk Falls was written in a stiff, nervous hand under a different condition of the system, and with a different pen from the original entries. The true theory of the case flashed upon the mind of the detective. Having deliberately planned the forgeries, Smythe must have taken the receipt of December 22d, changed the date, and made three additional entries above the signature of the postmaster at New Albany. The other receipt he suppressed, as its presence would at once have revealed the villany.

Having made these discoveries, the detective sauntered back to the office. Meanwhile the postmaster, informed of his arrival, also dropped in, and the two were soon engaged in animated conversation on topics of current interest, in which Smythe participated quite freely. At length the special agent, referring to the mail routes of Kansas, inquired whether the contractors in that vicinity were in the habit of performing the service properly.

"I tell you what it is," said Smythe, with an air of bravo, unconscious that he was fluttering like a moth into the flame, "I have been here thirty months, and during the time have had but three failures and two delays to report, and those all occurred upon the Emporia route."

The doors were closed, and only the three were present. Jumping up and stepping in front of the assistant, the agent inquired, "Mr. Smythe, will you take an oath in the presence of the postmaster that there have been no other delays here than those you have mentioned?"

The abrupt question, accompanied by a steady, scrutinizing gaze, seemed for a moment to paralyze him, but rallying as soon as the first shock of surprise was over, he answered, "Yes, sir, I mean it."

"Have there been no delays on the Humboldt route within that time?"

"No, sir."

"Nor on the New Albany route?"

"No, sir," — emphatically, — 'nor on the New Albany route."

"Have you kept a schedule of arrivals and departures, and kept it correctly?"

"Yes, I have."

"Let me see it."

During the colloquy, the drift of which was utterly unintelligible to him, the postmaster sat in mute astonishment, wondering what sort of a wild animal the post-office department had turned loose upon the people of Kansas, and what freak he would take next. The assistant produced the schedules, when the detective, as if by accident, picked up first the one for the New Albany route. The record of departures showed that the mails, which by contract were carried once a week each way, left Thursday, December 22d, and instead of leaving next the 29th, as they ought, were detained till Monday, January 2d.

Laying the paper on the table, the detective asked, in a tone somewhat bitterly triumphant, "Do you see that date of departure?"

"Yes, sir, I do," replied the assistant, catching the point for the first time.

"Now," continued the detective, directing the attention of the postmaster particularly to the salient features of the case, "let us examine the ear-marks on this receipt. Do you see where some scoundrel has raised the date from December 22 to 29, little dreaming when he planned the job that the mails would be delayed till January 2d? Observe the outlines of the original '2.' Notice, too, that the lower entries were not made at the same time, or with the same pen as the upper ones." Then turning to Smythe, he hissed forth, "O, what an infamous villain you are! Caught at last in your own trap! Where are those letters? I must have them here, and now."

But Smythe was no ordinary thief. Cool, brave, deter-

mined, self-reliant, a man of quick invention and great mental resources, equally ready to employ cunning or force for the accomplishment of his ends, he possessed the essential outfit of a daring and dangerous rogue. The opportunity for the development of his peculiar gifts in a small interior village was not large, but he managed to plot and rob so adroitly as to avoid suspicion and retain the good opinion of the com-



"O, what an infamous villain you are! Caught at last in your own trap!"

munity. Lights of such effulgence usually gravitate toward the cities, to become central figures in the various rings of vampires that fatten on the blood of the public.

Here the fellow showed grit. Despite the damning evidence which pointed overwhelmingly to him as both thief and forger, he denied the charge with perfect calmness, and did not quail a particle when threatened with arrest, but argued

that the robberies were committed at New Albany, and that a personal visit to that office would satisfy the agent of the fact.

After a prolonged but fruitless effort to break down the criminal, the officer withdrew for the night. In the morning he drove up to the office, and insisted so strongly that Smythe should accompany him to New Albany, that the latter was compelled to yield a reluctant assent. On reaching Twin Falls, fifteen miles distant, the detective stopped to examine the records, which were too imperfect to throw any light upon the case. Returning to the buggy, he found Smythe in conversation with Mr. Meklig, a resident of the place.

"I hope, while you are about here, you will find my money," remarked the gentleman.

"What money?" inquired the officer.

"Why, hasn't Smythe told you about it?" he asked, in surprise.

"No," answered the officer. "I don't understand you. What do you mean?"

"On the 22d of August," replied he, "I sent a letter addressed to a firm in Lawrence, containing three hundred dollars, to Eureka to be registered. The house never received it, and I can't find out anything about it."

Deadly pallor overspread the swarthy complexion of Smythe. In answer to the query of the detective, he stammered forth, as if the lie stuck heavily in his throat, "Why, I thought I told you about that letter. Yes, there were two mailed that day, and both seem to be lost."

"Smythe!" exclaimed Mr. Meklig, in astonishment, as if new light was breaking upon him, "is this the way you give information of losses to your superior officers?"

The other lost letter, mailed August 22d, contained one hundred and nine and a half dollars. To the mind of the detective, things were beginning to work splendidly.

They continued on to New Albany. The transit-sheet showed that the missing packages were received December

22d, and dispatched by the first outgoing mail to the railroad. According to the record they did not come a second time, as claimed by the office at Eureka.

A trained eye could see at a glance that the postmaster belonged to the class of busy, earnest, preoccupied men who have no time to plot mischief, or disposition to descend to rascality. Though powerfully built, and ready on provocation to deal heavy blows, he was evidently good-natured, generous, and frank to a fault. As the detective compared the countenances of the accuser and the accused, both strongly marked in outline and expression, but differing as widely as falsehood from truth, he thanked God that he was there to protect the right and unmask the wrong. When the pursuit of criminals is intrusted to the indolent, the incompetent, or the corrupt, it sometimes happens that the innocent, enveloped perhaps in a thin fog of suspicious circumstance that would dissolve at the first breath of real genius, are subjected to cruel hardships, while the actual offenders escape unharmed.

At New Albany, very much to his confusion and chagrin, Smythe was compelled to play the rôle of prosecutor. He had alleged that the thief would be found there, and was accordingly left to hunt up the evidence. While the fellow was rummaging among the papers, to make a show of doing something, the officer would now and then inquire in a low, seemingly confidential whisper, "Well, what do you find?"

The rogue fully appreciated the irony, but his muscles never relaxed. He was as unhappy as a police-court lawyer, who, to make an impression upon the mind of an unfortunate client, that in his extremity has promised a jackknife for a fee, tries to look sharp and wise, dreading every minute lest some one come in with a dun for seventy-five cents obtained under false pretences.

Smythe saw the disadvantages and perils of the situation, but did not lose heart; for hitherto cunning and resolution had piloted him safely through many dangers, giving him an ex-

aggerated confidence in the impregnability of his defences. He evidently regarded the detective as more of a bulldog than a hound, who would just as soon chase the shadow of a vulture as the body of a fox, yet gave him credit for discovering, by blunder or otherwise, the vital point of the case. With rare ingenuity the fellow contrived to manufacture false scents and trails, but the detective declined to bay upon a single one of them, contenting himself meanwhile with the simple exposure of the shams. Under a tranquil exterior, the feelings of the wretch must have seethed like the caldron of Macbeth's witches, yet he seemed to retain his wonted calmness and self-reliance.

They remained at New Albany two or three hours without discovering a scintilla of evidence against the postmaster. About five in the afternoon, having taken dinner, they started back for Eureka, but, as the roads were bad, the sky cloudy, and the night dark, only reached Twin Falls, where they put up at a small country tavern. Both occupied the same room ; and Smythe took advantage of the heavy slumbers of his companion to steal from his pocket the manipulated receipt which he seemed to regard as the principal evidence against him. When the officer discovered the robbery the next morning, he was terribly enraged to find himself outwitted and beaten at the second stage of the fight, after having succeeded so admirably in the first.

The contest that ensued was a struggle between gladiators. Mortified at the lack of vigilance which rendered the theft possible, stung by the covert, easy insolence of the fellow who now thought himself master of the situation, and withal impressed with a fuller appreciation of his desperate purpose and daring, the detective threw all his energies into the battle of wits. He is a grand talker, mesmeric and crushing by turns, whose words roll down upon the head of a criminal like the waters of a cataract ; but Smythe, unfortunately, was equally able as a listener. About five feet nine inches tall, broad-shouldered, though thin through the chest, with hair

and beard so intensely black that they glistened like the skin of some reptiles, with thin, bloodless lips contracting firmly



"Smythe took advantage of the heavy slumbers of his companion to steal from his pocket the manipulated receipt."

around a small mouth, and with diminutive, repellent eyes that sparkled with a peculiar snakish lustre, he could, if he chose, face a storm of denunciation and obloquy with the freezing stolidity of an Indian; or, if it better suited his purpose, he could strike back with any weapon that came to

hand. Such an antagonist was not a safe one to encounter at a disadvantage. It required a great deal of courage and sustained effort to look down into those cold, glassy, treacherous eyes, for this was what the detective aimed to do, as remarkable discoveries are often made by gazing from above into the "windows of the soul." If guilt is hidden within, it is very apt to reveal itself, especially if the criminal sits while the interrogator bends over him, for the inferior position detracts from his courage. This psychological law plays an important part in the science of detection, and agents cannot study it too closely.

That morning they were four hours in riding fifteen miles from Twin Falls to Eureka. With the ill-omened receipt either destroyed or secure in his own possession, the self-assurance of the accused returned, and he put forth his best efforts both as listener and reasoner. Managing his cause with admirable coolness and discretion, he made a determined defence, often slipping out as it were, from under the blows of his adversary, who as often found himself talking to empty space and wasting eloquence on the air.

In the course of the argument, however, Smythe became pretty well convinced that he was responsible for the stolen money ; and, finding that no confession could be wrung from him, the special agent moderated in his demands, and began to work for the recovery of the funds. The four packages, including the two sent from Twin Falls August 22d, contained four hundred and sixty-six and a half dollars. This sum he agreed to pay ; and on reaching Eureka, he placed the full amount in the hands of the detective to be distributed among the proper owners. The latter was aware that another special agent, under orders from the department, had visited the office shortly before to look into the money-order account, which was supposed to be considerably in arrears ; and, as Smythe had a habit of using the funds belonging to that branch of the business, the detective concluded that the large sum just transferred to his custody was probably abstracted thence to meet

the present unexpected emergency. He accordingly called for the books, and examined them carefully, finding several false entries, made by the assistant postmaster, for the purpose of tiding the rotten craft over the previous investigation. Smythe knew that when the accounts reached Washington, the manipulations would be discovered, and hence stole the letters from Twin Falls to make good the balance, and to facilitate the explanation of the fraudulent figures as mere "mistakes."

Mr. Furay unwound the false entries, and found the office eight hundred and thirty-seven dollars behind on money-order account. Now the law guards this fund with the most stringent penalties, making it a penitentiary offence for any postmaster or employé connected with the operations of this branch of the work, to convert to his own use, or misapply for any purpose whatever, any portion of the money-order funds. The special agent demanded the balance, threatening the guilty assistant with immediate arrest unless the entire amount was paid over.

Now, for the first time, Smythe was thoroughly alarmed, and began to beg like a dog. The postmaster, too, honest, kind, and credulous, who, till the moment of the discovery, would not believe a word reflecting on the integrity of the assistant, being overmastered by the power and guile of the snake, shared fully in the fright, not knowing where the extraordinary developments might end. The money in arrears must be forthcoming, or the tumbling walls would rattle about their heads. The serpent vanished from the eyes of Smythe, and, notwithstanding the theft of the receipt, the detective was again master of the situation. Weighted with the load of cumulative evidence, the criminal wilted under the gaze of the officer like newly-mown grass under a July sun.

He was advised to convey his property, worth about five hundred dollars, in fee simple to the postmaster, as partial indemnity for the misappropriated funds. Here an unexpected difficulty arose, the wife of the embezzler refusing to sign

the papers, as required by the laws of Kansas to make the transfer binding. Unsupported by any one in her singular resolution, she held out stubbornly against the united appeals of husband, postmaster, and detective, but finally yielded, and affixed her name to the deed. The postmaster then mortgaged to a local banker his newly acquired possessions, together with all his individual property, to raise the amount of the deficiency, and the rush with which the business was hurried through may be inferred from the fact that the officer in returning from New Albany reached Eureka about noon, and left at seven o'clock the next morning, having in charge both the surplus money-order funds and the entire amount stolen from the four registered letters. Where an agent is on the right track, and has cleared away outlying doubts and difficulties, delays are dangerous, while judicious but overwhelming precipitation almost invariably wins.

That night the detective neither slept nor lay down. Toward daylight, Smythe, who still denied the robberies, came and said, "I believe the letters from Twin Falls will yet be found. I have one favor to ask. Will you hold the money thirty days before delivering it to the owners? They left here, as registered letters, numbers nine and ten, in package envelope number nine, addressed to Lawrence, Kansas. For some unaccountable reason, I have no record of any of the packages which left that day."

"Certainly," replied the agent, "I will wait a month; and if the letters are found in the mean time, the money shall be restored to you."

Before starting, the detective requested the postmaster to report promptly any statement the suspected criminal might make in regard to the loss of the letters from the Eureka office, foreseeing that, with his rare and versatile cunning, he might proceed to manufacture evidence to suit his purposes. He also ordered the peremptory dismissal of the assistant — an order which the principal was more than ready to obey. As yet no person in Eureka outside of the official family knew the

nature of the trouble. The presumption was, that the young man would soon begin to explain matters to a curious public, and hang himself in the process. The situation would force him to talk ; and he was the more likely to be imprudent, for he confidently believed that in the arts of deceit he easily overmatched the people of the place, both individually and collectively.

On the return trip, the special agent passed the office to which Smythe claimed to have sent the package containing the two valuable letters mailed August 22d, and quietly examined the records. He found an entry of the other packages forwarded that day from Eureka, but number nine was not among them. The other offices on the route to Humboldt were successively visited with similar results. Neither of the postmasters on this line could have stolen the letters alleged to have been sent in January to New Albany, nor could the postmaster at that place have taken the package of August 22d, for it did not go within forty miles of his office. The centre of the maelstrom was located exactly at Eureka.

Proceeding on to Lawrence, the agent deposited in a national bank four hundred and nine and a half dollars, payable on his own order after thirty days, to the firm to which two of the letters were addressed, and held the balance of sixty-five dollars to liquidate the other losses, which in due time, upon presentation of the proper evidence, were severally made good.

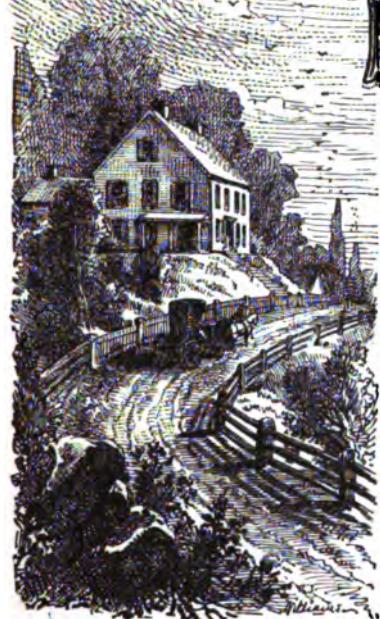
From Lawrence the officer returned to Omaha, where he was detained about two weeks in attendance on court and by other duties. Meantime, as he learned from the daily bulletins of the postmaster, a lively commotion had succeeded the ordinary calm at Eureka. Besides the position from which he was lately ejected, Smythe also held the office of deputy county clerk, and as he now had no other business, devoted himself exclusively to that. But the public were curious and inquisitive. It was known that an agent of the department had visited the post-office, and that after various mysterious movements, the assistant, after having long exercised almost

absolute control over its affairs, had suddenly left. The postmaster, as previously instructed by the special agent, declined to enter into explanations. The strain on the central object of all this interest became too great to be borne. As a politician and newspaper writer he could not remain quiet under the pelting of questions and insinuations, but, like many others similarly situated, tried the worst possible expedient to stop the clamor, in publishing a card to vindicate himself from the "aspersions of malignant enemies." In this document statements on vital points were made over his own signature entirely contradictory to those put forth with solemn reiteration during the late inquiry.

Returning immediately to Eureka, the special agent managed to get possession of the original manuscript of the card, whereupon he arrested Smythe and took him to Topeka, where the United States Court was then in session. Though ably defended, the prisoner was convicted, and sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary.

It was not till the doors of the prison had closed upon this bold, bad, dangerous man, that the most crushing evidence against him came to light. His successor, as deputy county clerk, in prying open a drawer which Smythe used for private papers, and which he left locked when taken away for trial, found the identical letter which Mr. Meklig sent to Eureka to be registered on the 22d of August. It was not postmarked, but bore the number "9" in the familiar chirography of Smythe. The envelope had been opened with a degree of skill which proved the operator to be an adept at the business. As might be inferred, the enclosure of three hundred dollars was missing. The county building, where the discovery was made, was half a mile from the post-office. Thenceforth the few adherents who professed to doubt the criminality of Smythe, were completely and forever silenced.

WHY DID SHE DO IT?



The Home of the Dunstones.

their "lines had been cast in pleasant places."

" Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool, sequestered vale of life,
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."

Yet a fierce tempest was about to burst upon one of the most peaceful and prosperous homes in that beautiful country. The Tempter that destroyed the happiness of the primeval garden had found lodgment in another Eden, and another Eve had been overcome by his lying whispers. Unseen and unsuspected, the steps of the avenger were drawing near, and his shadow was soon to darken the doomed threshold.

For a long time a system of mail depredations had been carried on somewhere in the vicinity, and several offices had come successively under suspicion. The son of the postmaster at Wexford was the first to be put to the test; and although numerous sufferers confidentially suggested to the special agent that he was the probable thief, the ordeal established his innocence. Satisfied that the source of the trouble must be sought elsewhere, special agent B. K. Sharretts, who was charged with the investigation, proceeded to subject to professional scrutiny several other offices around which the losses rained most heavily, but in every instance the baits most tempting to the palate of a thief passed along untouched. After one or two fruitless visits to this part of the country, fresh robberies furnished the clew that the offender operated at some point between Fulham and Wexford, and the agent accordingly returned, in full confidence that the mystery would soon be solved.

Communication between the two towns was kept up by a daily line of stages, that also supplied three intermediate offices, Masonville, Hamilton, and Eden. A single pouch contained both the local and through mail, and was opened by each postmaster on the route. As usual on such lines, the contents were emptied promiscuously on the floor, and after such letters and papers as belonged to the particular locality had been picked out from the mass, the residue was replaced, to undergo similar manipulation at the next stopping-place. As will be seen, the system affords ready opportunities for the commission of fraud. The party assorting the mail, even

when working under the eyes of casual observers, has only to shuffle foreign matter carelessly to one side with the packages for local delivery, and subject them to the dissecting knife at his subsequent convenience. There was abundant reason to believe that this was the method pursued in the present instance; and as the evil was of long continuance, the agent expected to find the criminal operating with reckless assurance. In such cases the main effort is expended in locating the thief, as he seldom fails to rush headlong into the net spread for his capture.

Special agent Sharretts, under the guidance of the new light now before him, carefully arranged a plan of operations, fully assured that the thought and labor expended on the case would soon bring the success which in the end usually rewards well-directed effort. Having already learned, during his operations in the neighborhood, that the stage-driver was both honest and discreet, he introduced himself to that functionary, explained sufficiently for the purposes of the occasion the object of his mission, and obtained a promise of hearty co-operation.

Preparing a number of letters, suggestive in appearance of a plethora of greenbacks and other valuables, he made a complete list of the contents of the pouch about to start upon its fateful journey, taking the address and destination of each missive. By previous agreement, the deputy United States marshal for the district was to follow from Wexford in a private carriage, about half a mile behind the stage, to be ready for any emergency that might arise.

On reaching Masonville, the pouch was handed to the postmaster, who, after assorting the contents in the customary style, returned it to the driver. As the horses jogged away, the agent opened the bag, to find that, except the local mail, nothing had been touched. The same thing happened at the next place, though the pouch had seldom been freighted with packets of such obvious value. If there was a thief at either office, he was evidently absent on this occasion, as an old

offender, emboldened by long immunity, would be extremely unlikely to hesitate in the face of such temptation.

As the agent relocked the pouch after the search beyond Hamilton, the driver remarked, "Well, friend, you may as well give up for to-day. The next office is kept by a lady, independently rich and of the highest character. She will not disturb anything that doesn't belong to her. She is one of the first ladies of the county, and no man living can say a word against her."

The agent, though convinced from the character of the losses that a thief was harbored in one of the three offices, was half inclined to come to the same conclusion. Throwing off the anxiety that had partially distracted his attention, he handed a fragrant "Havana" to his companion, and lighting another himself, surrendered his thoughts to the enchantments of nature. The air was soft, while the fields were burnished with crimson leaves and golden harvests. In winding over the hills, the road presented many grand outlooks, while peace and plenty seemed to hang over the country in perpetual benediction. Reared in the neighborhood, the driver knew every one on the route, executing their commissions at the terminal towns, and enjoying a popularity which many of more ambitious turn might envy. Amid scenes of such tranquillity the agent forgot the din of the metropolis, and wondered how, in the presence of the earth and sky, man could consent to break the laws of the Eternal Father, who had given him so beautiful a home.

In due time the coach reached "Eden," a substantial but solitary farm-house located on a steep hillside.

"It is no use to examine the bag here," remarked Jehu, as he drove away from the door. "I am not afraid to stake my existence that it's all right."

"Just so," replied the agent; "but in our business we never leave any outlets open, and I will go through it as a matter of form." Proceeding to unlock the bag, he discovered, to his own surprise and to the horror and dismay of the driver,

that all the decoys were missing, as well as several other letters directed to Fulham and points beyond. Yes, there was no mistake about it. They went over the list twice, each time with the same result. The letters were gone!



"Just so," replied the agent; "but in our business we never leave any outlets open, and I will go through it as a matter of form."

With a look of blank amazement, the driver broke out, "Can it be possible the wrong is here? What will happen next?"

"It is too true," answered the agent; "the trouble is yonder," pointing in the direction of Eden.

Poor Jehu was struck dumb, his confidence in human nature sadly shaken. They waited in silence for the arrival of the

marshal. When the latter drove up, the agent descended from the coach, briefly explained the situation, and sprang into the carriage, which was soon in rapid motion toward Eden.

The postmaster was a wealthy and influential farmer, named Dunston, known and respected for sterling virtues throughout a circuit of many miles. Till this day the breath of suspicion had never touched him or his house. He had consented to take the appointment, at their solicitation, for the benefit of the neighbors, but finding that the duties interfered with his labors on the farm, soon surrendered the entire management of its affairs to his wife. She, too, was equally respected. More than this, she was greatly beloved for an active, though unostentatious benevolence, that sought out the unfortunate, habitually supplying their needs with a generous and gracious hand. From personal experience of her bounties the poor stood ready to rise up and pronounce her "blessed." It was known that she had exclusive control of the office. Could it be possible that a lady rolling in wealth, eminent for beneficence, and raised far above the reach of ordinary temptation, was also a vulgar thief?

The house of the Dunstons was perched on the side of a rugged and precipitous hill. The road wound along the edge, with a steep embankment on one side that faded away into the leafy depths below. Behind a span of restive horses there was a much more comfortable feeling of security in ascending than in descending, particularly for a stranger, whose riding was mostly confined to the omnibus and railway coach.

In a few minutes the officers drove up to the door, and having secured the team, opened the gate into the enclosure, and walked up the path toward the house. At the same instant a woman stepped out upon the veranda, with a milk-pail in each hand, and crowned with an immense sun-bonnet, the cape of which concealed half her person. As she glided across the floor, toward the rear of the dwelling, the agent divined intuitively that the figure was Mrs. Dunston; and

barring the exit, without appearance of design in doing so, inquired, "Can you tell me, madam, where I can find the postmaster?"

"There isn't any postmaster here," she answered, in rather a brusque tone.

"The postmistress, then?"

"There isn't any postmistress, either."



"At the same instant a woman stepped out upon the veranda, with a milk-pail in each hand."

"Will you please inform me then, madam, who attends to the post-office?"

"I don't know anything about it," she snapped out still more brusquely.

Seeing from her manner that she suspected the visit of the strangers boded no good, and that if really Mrs Dunston, she was disposed to deny her identity, he felt that temporizing would be of no avail, and therefore said, "Allow me to differ

with you, madam. You are the postmaster, and I wish to have a few minutes' private conversation with you in your office. I am a special agent of the department."

On hearing this a deadly pallor overspread her face, and without further demur she led the way into the house. The officers followed into a neatly furnished sitting-room, which was also used for postal purposes. A brief survey of the establishment sufficed to discover that the inmates did not

affect the style of the city, but were content with the plain, solid comforts of home. Unless forced to the conclusion by overwhelming evidence, no one would expect to find a criminal in the mistress of such a dwelling.

In the most delicate manner consistent with the painful but unavoidable duty before him, the agent explained the object of his visit, and the official character of his companion. The courtesy of the announcement served to exasperate rather than to soothe. With an air of defiance she exclaimed, in discordant tones,

"Great God! that I should live to come to this."

"You are wretches and scoundrels! How dare you come here to insult me? I a thief, — accused of stealing, in my own house! Great God! that I should live to come to this."

Yet there were no signs of yielding. Resolution and sternness, upheld by an iron will, were stamped on every feature. It was at once seen that it was not a case for soft words or mild remedies.



“Diseases, desperate grown,
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.”

Without further wasting words in needless circumlocution, the agent came directly to the point. “Madam, you have been engaged in a long and systematic course of robbery. I am not mistaken. I know what I am saying, and appreciate the full import of my words. You, and no one else, are guilty of the depredations which have brought several innocent persons in the county under unjust suspicion, and have caused great annoyance and loss to the sufferers. The crime is all the more damning because there is not a circumstance to palliate its enormity. I can pity and forgive the poor wretch who steals for bread, but you have wealth that leaves not a wish ungratified. If so disposed, I could particularize scores of letters that you have robbed in the past; but it is not necessary. You took twelve this very day. To convince you that I speak advisedly, one was addressed to Brasil & Co., of Fulham, and contained forty-five dollars. Another, directed to Miss Susan Brown, held a silver coin folded in a piece of red ribbon. Those twelve letters are now in this house. Have them I must, and have them I shall.”

During the recital, the marble lineaments of her face gradually relaxed, and, overpowered by intensity of feeling, she fell into an hysterical sob. Without further making reply, or seeming to resent the terrible words of the accuser, she stepped quickly toward an open window, and placing her hands on the sill, gave a convulsive spring. The agent came up just in time to prevent her escape. What was his consternation on looking out, to discover that the window overhung a rocky ravine forty or fifty feet deep! A few seconds more and the wretched creature would have added self-destruction to the catalogue of her crimes.

Perplexing as was the situation, the search could not stop. Again the agent demanded the missing letters, only to elicit the reply, “I know nothing at all about them.” Even the ex-

perienced detective, whose acumen, trained by long practice, rivalled the scent of the hound, was staggered by the persistence and apparent sincerity of the denials. Whatever doubts, however, might be tolerated by the emotions of his heart, his intellect, on a calm survey of the facts, still assured him that his conclusions were correct.

Having led Mrs. Dunston to a seat, where she was closely guarded by the marshal, the agent proceeded to search the room, every nook and corner of which were carefully ex-



"She stepped quickly toward an open window, and placing her hands on the sill, gave a convulsive spring."

plored. He examined in detail the bureau, bed, stand, and other articles of furniture. He looked behind the pictures on the wall, and raised the carpet where loosely tacked, but thus far the inquest proved wholly fruitless: not a sign of the lost missives or their contents anywhere appearing. As the mystery deepened, the determination of the agent increased. Turning again to the woman, he remarked, with deliberate

emphasis, "the letters are not secreted about the room, but are hidden on your person. You must be searched unless you deliver them up at once."

Hastily placing her hand on her dress, she fiercely exclaimed, her eyes flaming with the fury of hell, "You shall not search me."

Grasping her by one wrist, the agent directed the marshal



"He now staggered into the room, and, appalled at a scene he could not comprehend, fell heavily to the floor."

to hold the other, and examine her pockets. As he attempted to comply with the request, a scream of terror and despair, that chilled the blood of the officers, filling the house with its clamor, and reverberating among the hills, broke from her

lips. A pretty, but half-idiotic girl, reared in the family, who had regarded the previous proceedings in silent bewilderment, aroused from stupor by the frenzy of the mistress, now joined in the fearful chorus, her excitement becoming so uncontrollable that her shrieks continued even after the final catastrophe. Nor did the agony of the females bound the misfortunes of the day.

“ When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.”

On entering the house, the officers observed a venerable gentleman walking up and down the parlor, with his arms folded behind his back. A profusion of silvery locks hung about his shoulders, and his form, though bent, still towered far above the ordinary height. He now staggered into the room, and, appalled at a scene which he could not comprehend, fell heavily to the floor. A mind weakened by old age succumbed to the shock. It was subsequently learned that, having lost all his relatives, he took up his abode with the Dunstons a quarter of a century before, and had since made their mansion his home. He loved “Faith,” as he called Mrs. Dunston, with the devotion of a father, and by will had bequeathed her a large estate. When the truth afterwards dawned upon him that the woman whom he believed to be endowed with more than earthly virtue, was, in the eye of the law, a criminal, the blow drove him to the grave.

Meanwhile farmer Dunston, aided by half a score of laborers, was engaged in a field at some distance from the house, gathering the harvest. Suddenly the terrific screams of the women awoke the hills with strange echoes. Leaving the teams to care for themselves, the crowd started for the domicile, each armed with whatever implement happened to be most convenient. Hurrying across the yard, where the sight of an unfamiliar carriage added fresh fuel to the flame, the band burst through a door in the back part of the room, headed by farmer Dunston in person. For a moment the

confusion of bedlam prevailed in that narrow apartment. It was indeed a sight to shock the strongest nerves. Upon the floor lay, in moveless swoon, the long, slender form of the old gentleman; the idiotic girl greeted the arrival of the band with a whoop that might have served as an Indian battle-cry; the wife sobbed hysterically; and amid all, the evident authors of the terror and the tumult, stood two strangers. The marshal, unprepared for the crisis, shrank back aghast. His momentary discomfiture might be accepted as a tacit confession of an evil purpose. Who were these unknown men? Why had they invaded the sanctity of this happy home? In the estimation of the rustics, who glared upon the officers with looks of mingled amazement and ferocity, no lawful object could have drawn them thither. To her neighbors, Mrs. Dunston was a paragon of excellence. As soon would they doubt an angel from heaven, as question her integrity. There could be but one explanation of the mystery. The strangers must be robbers, burglars, ready, perhaps, to bury deeds of lesser blackness under the crowning crime of murder. Such conviction seemed to flash simultaneously upon the band of rescuers. Mr. Dunston sprang forward with a pitchfork in his hands, prepared to impale upon its glittering tines the representative of the post-office department. The case was too plain to call for judge or jury.

At this juncture, raising his arm with a look of conscious rectitude, and maintaining an imperturbable calmness that awed into silence the excited throng, the special agent quietly said: "Stop. We are officers of the United States government. We come hither to perform a painful but imperative duty. This gentleman is a marshal. I am a special agent of the post-office department."

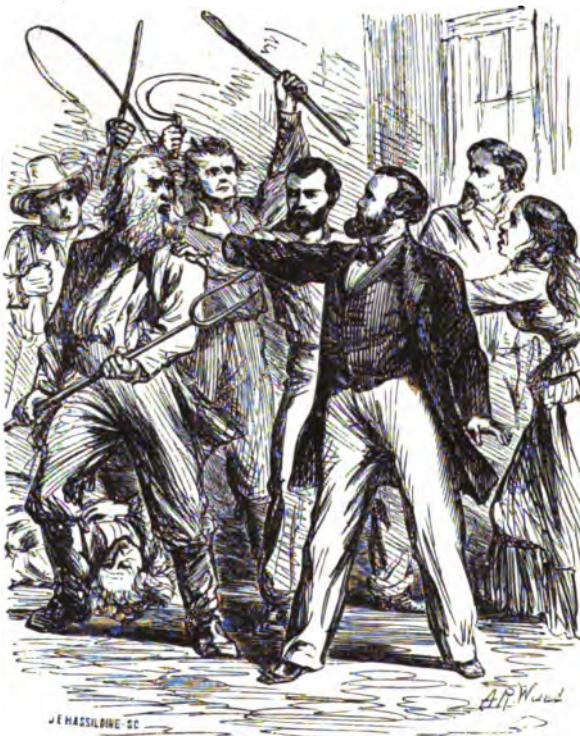
In the heterogeneous crowd there happened to be a returned volunteer, who now stepped to the front. In the army, having learned to appreciate the deference due to the authority of the government, he remarked, borrowing a hint from the argument of Gamaliel, "Hold on. If they are United States

officials, you have got to hear them. If they are impostors, we can deal with them afterwards."

Dead silence succeeded the previous clamor, and the agent proceeded to exhibit his commission.

"What is the matter?" inquired Mr. Dunston.

"I am pained to say," answered the officer, "that numerous



"Stop! We are officers of the United States government. We come hither to perform a painful but imperative duty."

robberies of the mail have been committed at this place, and your wife is the guilty party."

Turning to the wife with a look of tenderness and confidence, the husband inquired, "Faith, is this true?"

The crowd strained forward with eager intentness to catch

the answer. "No, no ; I am innocent. I would not think of such a thing. I could not think of such a thing."

The cloud rolled from the face of the old man. Clasping the woman fondly, he gave expression to his perfect trust in her integrity. "Old girl, we have lived together forty years, and I believe you. Men, you are mistaken. We have plenty — more than we know what to do with. She has no occasion to be bad. At her time of life she cannot be bad. Impossible!"

"Mr. Dunston," answered the officer, "it would be an inexpressible relief to me to be able to go away and leave your dream unbroken, but such a course, however agreeable to my feelings, is out of the question. The charge is too true. As she well knows, she took twelve letters to-day, and at this moment has them secreted on her person. She must be searched. If she refuses, it will be necessary to take her to Wexford, where the work may be done by ruder hands."

Convinced from his looks and manner that Mr. Dunston was a man of thorough truth and honor, who might be permitted to hold the scales of justice even where his own dearest interests hung trembling in the balance, the agent told him that he could accompany his wife to an adjoining room, the door being left ajar, and hand out her garments as she disrobed. One article of apparel after another was



*"Old girl, we have lived together forty years,
and I believe you."*

passed through the aperture for examination, but for some time without discovery of a sign of the contraband treasures. Happily the period of suspense, so painful to all, could not, in the rapid rush of events, last much longer. As the search progressed toward the primitive foundations, a shadow of doubt momentarily crossed the mind of the officer, yet the intuition, won by long practice and trusted at length as infallible, still assured him that his theory could not be wrong. He accordingly watched every movement with the preternatural acuteness of vision developed by the business of detection, and at a stage of the proceedings where the cumulative discouragements would have driven any but a thorough professional to surrender in despair, a sudden disclosure, wholly unlooked for by the rest of the expectant company, established the truth of his judgment. While the lady was disentangling a garment that had fallen about her feet, the stillness was broken by the thud of a package of letters on the floor.

The poor, broken-hearted wife threw herself at the feet of her husband, and clutching him convulsively by the knees, ejaculated piteously, "John, O John, forgive me!"

"Faith, Faith," he tremblingly asked, "how is this?"

"John, I don't know. O forgive me, forgive me!"

At this tacit confession of guilt, the husband, crushed in spirit and overpowered by intense emotion, threw his arms lovingly about the neck of the prostrate wife, when both wept like children. Comparative calm succeeded the outburst of grief. He directed the company of laborers to disperse, and they seemed relieved to be permitted to escape from the oppressive atmosphere. Thenceforth the husband offered neither suggestion nor hinderance, remaining a passive spectator of what followed. Upborne by a sense of justice which even the strongest affections could not shake from its eternal foundations of rock, he had no thought of attempting to evade the penalties of a broken law. Neither did he desire to have the facts disguised or concealed, but said repeatedly, "Faith, my dear girl, if you have done

wrong, tell the truth. I'll stay by you through thick and thin; I'll never desert you."

By this time Mrs. Dunston had become quite calm. Of the letters purloined, some were *bona fide* communications directed to different localities, while others had been prepared by the agent, who was of course acquainted with the contents. Only a part of the missing letters, and not one



"The poor, broken-hearted wife threw herself at the feet of her husband, and ejaculated piteously, 'John, O John, forgive me!'"

of the decoys, were found on her person. It was now needful to ascertain whither these had disappeared.

The officer addressed Mrs. Dunston with gentle decision. "Of course you will follow the excellent advice given by your husband, and explain these transactions fully. What did you do with the letter containing the silver coin and the ribbon?"

Dazed and abstracted as if but partially recovered from a stunning blow, she replied, at the same time pointing me-

chanically toward an article of furniture in the corner, "I don't know; but if it is anywhere about the house, it may be in the drawer of that stand."

The agent had already examined the stand thoroughly, as he supposed. On renewing the search, however, he discovered that its face had been turned toward the wall so as to conceal the existence of the drawer. On restoring the table to its proper position, the hidden receptacle was revealed, and there, sure enough, were the coin and ribbon, with several pieces of jewelry, a pair of kid gloves, and a number of other articles which were enclosed in the test letters stolen an hour or two before. Some of the envelopes were also found in the same place, but the letters were not there. The scattered fragments of these were subsequently discovered in the ravine under the window.

"Mrs. Dunston, will you be kind enough to inform me where to look for the letter containing seven dollars and a half?"

In the same listless and abstracted manner, she replied, "O, I don't know; I can't tell; but if it is anywhere, it may be in that curtain," designating a particular window.

Following the indication, the officer untied the string, and allowing the curtain to unroll, found the money secreted in the coil.

"Madam, there is still another to be accounted for—the one containing forty-five dollars; what did you do with that?"

She hesitated a moment, when the husband spasmodically interrupted the flow of events. "Tell it all, Faith. Don't keep anything back. You can't make it any worse now." At the same time he soothingly stroked with both palms the hair upon her temples, and kissed her forehead.

Apparently in deep agony as if appalled at the sacrilege of the act, she replied, "I don't know. Perhaps you may find it between the leaves of God's Holy Book, on the parlor-table."

The letter was not there, but the bills were scattered along

the pages of the Old and New Testaments. The contents of all the decoys were recovered.

It now became necessary that she should accompany the officers to the county seat, for a preliminary hearing before a United States commissioner. Offering no objection to the proposal, she was permitted to leave the room to make the needful preparations. She started quietly for the door leading up stairs, but when opposite the open window, dashed frantically toward it, and made a second attempt to end her life and the investigation together. Again by a rapid spring the officer interposed in time to prevent the tragedy. After that there was no relaxation of vigilance, and as night was drawing on, the arrangements for departure were hastily pushed under the direct supervision of the representative of the post-office department.

The repeated attempts at self-destruction, following the tumultuous outbreak of passion and of grief, betrayed the fury of the tempest that raged within. Well might she join in the refrain of the common mother of the race, when the dread sentence of banishment from Eden was announced :

“ Must I thus leave thee, Paradise? thus leave
Thee, native soil, these happy walks and shades,
Fit haunt of gods?”

The four people most deeply interested in the events of the hour were soon seated in the carriage of the marshal, and were bowling along at a rapid pace toward the neighboring town. The agent whose sagacity and contrivance had succeeded in exploding the mine that had long imperiled the mails, began to felicitate himself on the prospect of a comparatively tranquil termination to a tempestuous day, when another catastrophe occurred, which, for the moment, threatened to prove more generally destructive than either the projected leap from the window or the lunge from the pitchfork. Bad news flies fast, losing nothing in the way of point or embellishment on the road. While the events described were taking place,

rumors of the arrest were dispersed as if on the wings of the wind. The excitement was intense and contagious. People could not remain at home. On account of the social position, wealth, and hitherto irreproachable character of the prisoner, large crowds, some from curiosity, others from sympathy, thronged into the town from all directions, in vehicles of every description, blockading the streets, and almost barricading the entrance to the hotel. The high-spirited team driven by the marshal, growing impatient under the excitement of the crush, became well-nigh unmanageable. Dashing up to the pavement in front of the "Fulham House," they brought to grief a couple of light buggies that happened to obstruct the passage, and scattered the throng that loitered about the sidewalk.

Mr. Dunston and the marshal alighted, the latter carelessly dropping the reins over the dashboard. The agent and prisoner were about to follow, when the horses started on a furious run up the street. By the suddenness of the spring he was nearly thrown headlong from the carriage. It had grown quite dark; and an interval that seemed long to the imperiled traveler, when measured by the distance traversed, elapsed before the lost reins were recovered. To add to the terror of the situation, the woman shrieked, "Let them run! let them run! I want to die! I want to die!" Her *compagnon de voyage*, not sharing in a like ambition for summary extinguishment, succeeded, by the outlay of herculean strength, in stopping the span just as they were rushing upon a pile of dirt and rocks thrown from a contiguous excavation. A few feet more, and the gratification of the mad wish of the woman would have been tolerably sure. The team was driven back to the hotel, with an immense retinue of pedestrians following. Irritated at the mishap, and eager for a victim on whom to empty the vials of wrath, the officer at once interviewed the landlord, censuring him for permitting the blockade in front of his establishment, and for not furnishing attendants at the door to care for the horses of guests. Boniface seemed to

appreciate the force of the criticism, and apologized with due humility. As evidence of good faith in the matter, he offered to pay all damages, remarking, as if the smallness of the loss contained a suggestion of comfort, "Only two buggies were smashed, anyhow." He also added a malediction on the owners, which a regard for the proprieties compels us to omit.

Mr. Dunston and the officers accompanied the prisoner to the parlor, where they endeavored to persuade her to partake of refreshments; but she obstinately refused either to eat or to drink. Meanwhile the impertinent curiosity of the multitude, some of whom acted like half-tamed boys at a menagerie, became excessively annoying. The nuisance soon reached a crisis. A hatchet-faced woman, preceded by a nose, long, and thin, and sharp of edge, that inverted might have served as an excellent model for the prow of a blockade-runner, raised the latch, and, peering into the room, soliloquized in an undertone, "Neow dew tell. Who'd 'a' tho't it?" Her glassy eye shot forth a gleam of triumph, as if happy in fancied superiority to the poor woman who had always been held up to the sisterhood as a model of excellence. But the expression of sinister satisfaction on that ill-omened countenance was of short duration. Exasperated at the inhumanity of the proceeding, the representative of the post-office department gave the door so sudden a slam that it impinged with considerable force on the summit of her proboscis. A stifled scream of pain and a tiny stream of blood followed simultaneously. A moment after, the door burst open, and there was presented the apparition of a giant, crowned with a shock of that fiery red hair indicative of a temper at once sanguinary and irascible. Hardly deigning to bestow a look on the inmates, he came directly to the point. "Whar's the chap that hurt my wife?"

Our David, himself a man of powerful frame and dauntless courage, satisfied from the passion flaming on the visage of Goliath that the fellow meant mischief, thought it better to overcome him by a ruse than by a sling. Pointing to another

door on the side of the room, he quietly answered, "A servant just stepped out." He may be the person you are looking for."

The giant stalked across the parlor, and, to the relief of the occupants, disappeared. It so happened, however, that on emerging into the hall he espied a servant turning a corner in the rear. Taking it for granted that this was the "chap who hurt his wife," he followed with huge strides the unsuspecting



"With a long, dirk shaped needle, she was trying to pierce her heart."

victim of misplaced confidence, and with his massive fist delivered a blow that might have felled an ox. As the sequel, a late immigrant from Hibernia measured his full length upon the floor, a vicarious sacrifice for the offense of another.

When quiet was restored, the prisoner requested the husband, who continued to hang over her, watching every movement with the devotion of a lover, to leave her alone with the

special agent; and he, thinking that she intended to make further disclosures, joined in the request. Both sat in silence a few minutes, the officer supposing that she was trying to collect her scattered thoughts. All at once he noticed a peculiar movement of the right hand over the left breast, accompanied by a convulsive contraction of the face, caused apparently by a twinge of pain. Divining the purpose of the wretched woman, he grasped her hand, and drawing it away, encountered the gleam of steel. With a long, dirk-shaped

needle she was trying to pierce her heart, and had partially succeeded, for blood followed the withdrawal of the instrument.

The others were recalled and a surgeon sent for. It was found that the needle had penetrated three-fourths of an inch, but slightly missing the heart. During the rest of the night a vigilant guard was kept over the prisoner, the agony of the stricken husband touching the sympathies of the watchers not less than the misery of the wife. He refused to lie down or take rest, but passed the weary hours in pacing the room and adjacent corridor, wringing his hands, and ejaculating, "Faith, Faith, my old girl — my dear old girl, why did you do this? You didn't know what you were doing — no, no, I know you didn't. Forty years we have been together, and this is our first sorrow. Thank God, we have no children to suffer with us."

After the stormy and afflictive scenes of the day but few fitful snatches of sleep visited the eyelids of the agent during the night. It is always painful to an officer to be instrumental in exposing crime where the suffering falls with equal weight upon the innocent and upon the guilty. He has, however, no choice or alternative. As Justice, in her stern and inflexible decrees, regards not age, or sex, or station, neither can the servants commissioned to obey her behests. Responsibility for the suffering is not theirs, nor would any right-minded person, where proper consideration has been shown for the feelings of others, hold them in the slightest degree of censure.

"So may you blame some fair and crystal river,
For that some melancholic, distracted man
Hath drowned himself in't."

The next morning the party took the early train for the county-seat, the prisoner apparently calm and imperturbable. Soon after the cars moved out of the depot, rising from her seat, she snatched the hat from her head, and tore it into shreds. Her shawl she trampled under foot, and seizing her

dress with both hands, by a frantic effort nearly succeeded in disrobing herself. Among the passengers consternation followed this wild outburst of passion. By gentle firmness and mild persuasion the special agent, who had now acquired more control over the prisoner than any one else, soothed her into tranquillity, when the ladies in the coach, many of them friends of long standing, kindly came forward, and furnished the needful articles of apparel to render her again presentable. After this she passed into a condition of com-



"Rising from her seat, she snatched the hat from her head, and tore it into shreds."

plete quietude and passivity, apparently resigned for whatever fate might have in store. Thenceforward to the end of the trial she continued perfectly calm, giving no further trouble.

On arriving at their destination, the officers found that the United States commissioner was absent. They accordingly proceeded on to one of the large interior towns of the state,

where the sessions of the district court are held at stated intervals.

Within a couple of weeks the trial took place. Nearly all the influential people from the county of the Dunstons were present to plead for mercy in behalf of a beloved neighbor,



"The husband, so tender, and true, and faithful, that he would willingly have bared his own heart to the shaft to spare that of the wife, stood at her side to support her trembling form."

who had sinned, as they believed, from some lack of mental equilibrium hitherto unsuspected. So effective were these appeals, supported as they were by the ardent efforts of the officer who brought the crimes to light, and who in the present undertaking had the hearty concurrence of the postmaster-

general, to whom the facts had been communicated, that the prisoner was permitted to plead guilty to a minor count in the indictment, involving a slight punishment only. The remaining counts were quashed.

The husband, so tender, and true, and faithful, that he would willingly have bared his own heart to the shaft to spare that of the wife, stood at her side to support her trembling form, as she rose to receive the sentence of the court, — a sight which so affected the judge, the jury, and the audience, that there was scarcely a dry eye in all that vast concourse.

In the most feeling manner the judge addressed the prisoner, expressing profound sorrow that one in her position should be brought to such humiliation. He closed in substance thus : "I am glad to witness the devotion of your good husband, who stands by you unsaftelessly in this dark hour. The cross is yours, the crown is his. If I had the power, I would open the doors of this court-room, and say, 'Go in peace ;' but the law is above me, and I am its humble instrument. The court sentences you to pay a fine of five hundred dollars, and to imprisonment for ten days."

Had it been allowable, Mr. Dunston would have shared the cell with his wife. As it was, he attended her as closely as the rules of the jail would permit. Meanwhile the prisoner beguiled the hours by knitting incessantly.

No motive ever appeared for these extraordinary robberies. When mental laws are better understood, perhaps philosophy will be able to explain the mystery.

A DESPERADO ROUTED.



"The broken-hearted wife was left day after day to the solitary companionship of sad thoughts and gloomy forebodings."

TOWARD the close of February, several years ago, the cars left one of our special agents, shortly after nightfall, at a wayside station, not far from the foot of the mountain ranges of Georgia. The railroad extended but few miles beyond, and was still in process of construction. As yet a clearing had hardly been made in the dense forests which stretched away in all directions, even for the frail shelter that served as a depot. The objective point of the officer was a village ten or eleven miles distant; and, until his hopes were suddenly dashed by the sta-

tion agent, he supposed there would be no difficulty in proceeding on to his destination the same evening. He was informed, however, that the mail left in the morning, and that there was no chance for a passenger by the night train to reach town the same day, unless he had previously arranged

to have a conveyance sent over expressly to meet him. He received, moreover, the somewhat depressing information that there was no habitation in the neighborhood where a stranger could obtain lodging. The station-agent lived several miles away, his family were sick, and he had no horse. The rumble of the departing train had already died away in the distance, and the depot-master was about to close the shanty for the night, when a wrinkled but cheery face appeared at the



"Mounting the ox-wagon with half a dozen bright-faced children, they rode for an hour through the woods."

door, at the sight of which the stranger felt instinctively that the kindly old man would never turn a fellow-being away. Without waiting for persuasion or argument, he freely extended the hospitalities of his home. Mounting the ox-wagon with half a dozen bright-faced children, who kept their father company, they rode for an hour through the woods, in the light of the bright full moon, till they reached the plain but

happy abode of the warm-hearted farmer. Huge logs, blazing on the hearth, lit up the family room, recalling the primitive days when whole households nestled on wintry nights in the corners of the capacious fire-places.

Early the next morning a couple of mules, saddled and bridled, were brought to the door, and our chance acquaintance piloted the officer to town. He was chatty and communicative, and, in a gentle, undemonstrative way, seemed rather piqued that his confidences were not returned with equal freedom.

The village post-office was kept by the widow of the late postmaster, the family comprising herself and a daughter of sixteen. Unfortunately for her reputation and happiness, the mother had by degrees come to intrust its management to a great extent to a desperado whom nearly every one in the community both hated and feared. Born of an honorable ancestry, he had wasted his youth in dissipation, squandered his patrimony, wrunged the younger members of the family out of their rightful inheritance, and was commonly suspected of having committed still darker crimes for the purpose of hiding his guilt. A year before he married a beautiful girl, only to treat her, and the infant she bore, with brutal neglect. Ere the honeymoon had passed, the broken-hearted wife was left, day after day, to the solitary companionship of sad thoughts and gloomy forebodings, while the husband became more deeply infatuated with the surroundings of the post-office. Alone she watched till late into night for steps that did not come. For the bride of twelve months, crushed by cruelty and withered by neglect, life was robbed of its joys, and the future held in store nothing brighter than the grave.

Although greatly incensed at the scandalous misconduct of the man who seemed to have acquired a complete and fatal mastery over the postmaster, and through whose hands all their correspondence had to pass, if pass it might, the public made but feeble efforts to throw off the load, having settled

into the sullen but mistaken belief that through the indifference of the government to the character of officials, their wrongs were without remedy. In answer to an inquiry from the department regarding a rifled registered letter received there for delivery from a town in Virginia, the clerk, deviating from the customary routine, at great length attempted to account for complaints which he surmised might be pouring in upon the postmaster-general, on the theory that the people, through continued disloyalty, omitted no opportunity to make unjust reflections upon the friends of the Union, begging that this fact might be considered in estimating the value of popular murmurs.

As it was necessary to have his co-operation, the agent made known his business to the contractor who carried the mails to the depot, and who also kept the village hotel. This gentleman imparted the information that certain individuals in the community were suffering fearfully from depredations on the mails, and mentioned numerous instances to substantiate the statement. Out of the multitude of losses only three had been reported to the proper officials, showing how neglectful sufferers are of the duty, owed alike to themselves and to others, of promptly notifying the department of such troubles, that the needful steps may be taken to correct them, by bringing the offenders to punishment. Here was a "bonanza" of petty thievery the operations of which were carried on without molestation simply because the parties most deeply interested neglected to communicate the facts. Not being omniscient, the government cannot well correct evils of which it has no knowledge, though often blamed for not doing so.

A decoy, sufficiently distended with greenbacks to betray its probable value, and directed to Louisville, Ky., to a somewhat questionable absorbent of the funds of the gullible, was dropped, in the afternoon, into the letter-box at the post-office. It should have left early the next morning, but a careful search of the mail-pouch failed to discover it. Though it is always a matter of grave doubt when it is best to begin the

hunt for a letter that has thus mysteriously disappeared, the agent concluded to delay another day. If the contents had been actually stolen, there seemed to be no feasible mode of reaching the fact indirectly without exciting suspicion.

As several people in the village knew him by sight, he was obliged to remain in-doors, content with such entertainment as a rural hotel afforded. The tedium was relieved in a measure by the plaintive garrulity of a countryman from a distant part of the state, who seemed to experience great comfort in finding a patient listener into whose ear he could pour the tale of his infelicities. More than seventy years had passed over his head, leaving few wrinkles to tell the story of toil and hardship. Yet he had no associates about the inn, and his energies were unnerved by deep despondency. The officer invited him to his room to share the comforts of an open fire-place, where the genial blaze soon thawed out his confidences.

"I tell you what, stranger, — what mout I call your name? — I reckon my wife — my second wife I'm speaking of now — is the queerest woman you ever seen or heerd tell on."

"How so, my good friend, — what is the matter?"

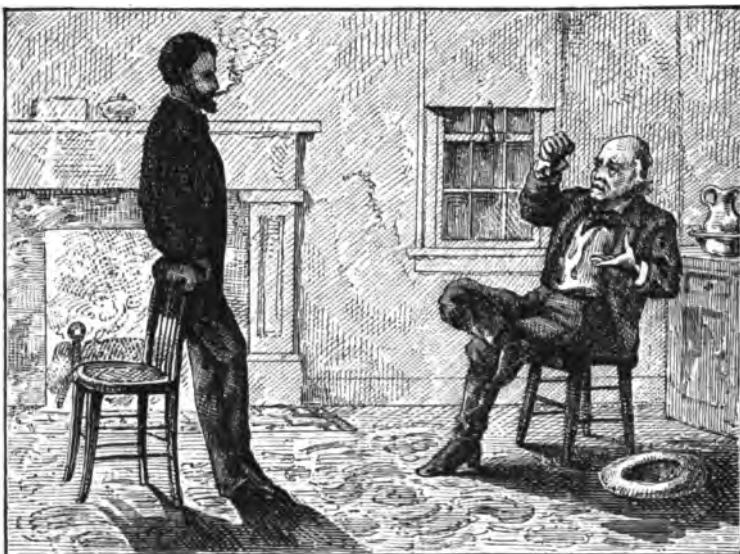
"My first wife was jest as different as she could be. A good woman — a right good woman she was. We lived together over thirty years, — she was the mother of eight children, — and in all that time I never had to smack her chops once. She never spoke a cross word, and allers did jest as I told her."

"Blessed woman! She passed on to a happier existence — did she?"

"Yes; she died, and the old house was powerful lonely. You see, stranger, my gals had growd up and got married, and I was left by myself sorter. The darter of a neighbor of mine — a mighty purty gal she was, too — peared to take a great fancy to me, and came gallivantin' round, so sweet that honey wouldn't melt in her mouth. Wall, I kinder took a likin' to her; and things was so out o' jint about home that we struck up a match right off."

"Hope you did not have any trouble, neighbor."

"Trouble, stranger! — nothin' but trouble. That woman knew I had a big plantation, and she korted me 'cause I'se rich. Poor gal, she was; hadn't nothin' to speak of herself — Proud as thunder — Began to raise the 'Old Scratch' right off — Wanted a bran new kerridge, and the best horses in the county — Couldn't get dresses enough, nor nice enough — Couldn't stand it, I couldn't — got mad, I did. Had a time — we did — right along."



"Quarrel, stranger! Why, I whipped that woman every day, reg'lar."

"You did not quarrel?"

"Quarrel, stranger! Why, I whipped that woman every day, reg'lar. Had to. No livin' without. I hated to; but what else could a man do, now?"

"Did you ever try kindness?"

"Yes. About a year ago I made up my mind never to strike her again, no matter how bad she acted; and I never did, stranger. Sometimes she made me powerful mad, but I allers kept my hands off."

"Under the new treatment, didn't she behave better?"

"Better! There's no better about that woman. . Soon as the whippings stopped, the devil in her came out worse than ever. Nothin' in the wide univarse but a good floggin' every day could keep her under; but arter makin' up my mind, I wasn't goin' to whip her again even to save her."

"So you thought you would leave her a while, and so wandered hither?"

"Not exactly. She ran away from me. Six weeks ago I came home one cold night: the fire was all out, and she was gone. As I got my supper alone, I felt powerful sad; I have felt so ever since—can't throw it off. You know arter a man gets kinder wonted to a woman, some way he don't know how to get along without her. Never thought I should miss her so."

"It is a hard case indeed. What did you do about it?"

"The next day I rode over to her father's, but she wasn't thar. I went on to her brother's, and she wouldn't see me. I told him to offer her everything if she would come back. It didn't do no good. Couldn't move her an inch."

"And you went back without her?"

"Without her, yes, all by myself. The old place was so dismal—all alone—that I couldn't stay there. Thought I would go off a long ways. Mebbe, when she heerd I was gone, she mout feel different, and come back."

"How much further do you propose to travel?"

"Don't know; don't much care. For me the bottom has sorter dropt out o' things. Don't matter much what comes o' me now."

"You are quite a distance from home now, my friend, and have travelled over some rough country."

"That's so, stranger. I never had an idee before that the world was so big a place. Wonder if it reaches as far the other way from my plantation as it does this?"

As well as he could, the special agent tried to comfort the old man, and, as his manner seemed to solicit counsel, advised

him to return home and try to win back his wife by gentleness and affection. He appeared to recognize the propriety of the suggestions, and promised to act upon them. Circumstances never threw him in the way of learning how the policy of conciliation succeeded.

The next morning the outgoing mail was again examined, but the letter for Louisville was not to be found. Warrants were quietly procured for the search of the premises and the arrest of the suspected parties. It so happened that the clerk had gone out for an early hunt; and the sheriff of the county, who took a deep interest in capturing the marauders, was directed to be on the outlook for his return, and to take him in custody before he had an opportunity to communicate with any one. In company with the contractor the agent proceeded to the post-office to learn what could be discovered there.

The postmaster, a woman of perhaps thirty-eight or forty, still retained many traces of personal beauty. Gentle in manner, correct and expressive in conversation, and modest in deportment, she would have passed among strangers as a lady of character and accomplishments. By previous arrangement the contractor planted himself in such a position that neither of the women could leave the room, as, if a robbery had been committed, it would take but a moment to destroy every trace of it, while in examinations of this kind every point must be guarded.

A most painful duty, but one that could not be shirked, now devolved upon them. About woman, as woman, hovers a sanctity which man involuntarily respects. He finds his delight in rendering her homage, and in bearing, so far as may be, her burdens. Except among the outcasts of society, whither post-officials are seldom required to go, the footmarks of crime happily lead but rarely back to a female. Sex, however, offers no immunity for guilt. If woman, forgetful of her high prerogatives, violates the law, neither it nor its officers can discriminate in her favor. For the moment

they are compelled to repress habitual sympathies, and to recognize nothing but the stern exactions of justice.

After examining under some pretext all the usual receptacles for mail matter without discovering the lost missive, the object of the visit was plainly stated. Both mother and daughter protested they had no knowledge of the letter. Tears flowed plentifully, but dropped on hearts of oak. At length a painful and exhaustive search, prolonged for nearly two wearisome hours, was rewarded with success. Under a large box, where it could not have been placed except by design, the letter was found. It bore the post-mark of the office, and, after much deliberation, had evidently been laid aside for future dissection. It was probably put there by the mother for concealment from her co-partner, the clerk, on the ground that he was not dividing the spoils squarely.

It would have suited the parties engaged in the hunt much better to have discovered the money on the person of the man, but there was no alternative save to accept things as they were found. While the fact of embezzlement was indisputable, it was clearly impossible to prove which of the three committed the act, as either one might have done it, and without the knowledge of the others. It was the general belief that the desperado employed as clerk was chiefly responsible for the thefts that for a year or more had annoyed incessantly an uncomplaining public, and a few leading citizens were exceedingly anxious to have the affair so managed as to induce the postmaster to make a full disclosure of all she knew. As the woman still professed entire ignorance of any criminal acts in connection with the office, a change of resolution on her part could only be effected by tact and time. As a preliminary move, she was accordingly informed that, being the custodian of the mails, she was accountable in a measure for the robberies, and must submit to a legal investigation.

A venerable justice of the peace, called upon to sign the papers and to act as committing magistrate, stood ready, as usual in such cases, to follow the suggestions of the special

agent. Not a person in the place could be induced to go upon a bond for her appearance. In the extremity of her need the poor woman stood alone without friend or counselor, the long suppressed disgust and wrath of the public culminating in a desire to rid the village forever, if possible, of the partners in crime. Not a dollar would any one risk for her liberty. If secret commiseration was felt by any one in the community, it found no expression.

A stranger in the town, and unfamiliar with the associations which brought down upon her devoted head the detestation of the neighborhood, the sympathies of the officer in her behalf were strongly aroused. Since the evidence in possession of the government fell far short of the ample and definite legal proof required for conviction in court, he did not feel justified in imposing any unnecessary hardship upon a defenceless woman already tortured by the pangs of awakening conscience, and crushed by the sudden collapse of all her hopes, however far she might have strayed from the path of rectitude. After due consideration, the magistrate accordingly accepted her personal recognizance in the sum of five hundred dollars to answer for trial at the next term of the United States Court. Of course the bond being a mere form, left the prosecution to depend wholly upon her good faith.

Meanwhile the clerk returned from the hunt, and, having no opportunity to communicate with his late confederate, was as irrepressible as an overcharge of electricity struggling to join its opposite. Nearly six feet tall, with the frame of a Hercules, a magnificent physique, and a face rather handsome in superficial expression, his bodily perfection only brought out more conspicuously his mental and moral deformities. With an eye cruel but irresolute, and a countenance in which the effeminacy produced by early indulgence had been hardened into desperation by evil thoughts and wicked deeds, his purposes evidently vibrated between malignity and cowardice. A single searching look sufficed to convince even a stranger that he was an assassin by instinct, ready on provocation to

stab in the dark, or to fire from an ambush. In the gloomy recesses of his heart, brutality and fear struggled for mastery, the dread of retribution being the chief, if not the only force that withheld him from giving full license to his ferocious impulses.

In the evening the special agent met two or three gentlemen of the place, who had in various ways been drawn into the investigation, to take an inventory of the stamps and other property belonging to the government, with the view of placing the office in the custody of a reputable party till a new postmaster could be commissioned. The bond of the incumbent was worthless, her confederate being the principal surety. She expressed great anxiety to get rid of a responsibility that had led through constant troubles and vexations to what seemed at last her irretrievable ruin.

The office was kept in the front room of a small house containing two or three poorly furnished apartments, which served also as the dwelling of the postmaster and her daughter. A door and window opened upon a piazza, the public receiving their mails through the window. While the group were at work taking an account of stock, the clerk, maddened with liquor and frenzied with passion, crept stealthily on to the piazza, armed with a double-barreled gun. He pressed



The Desperado.

against the thin partition-wall, so that his subdued, irregular breathing and muffled movements could be heard within. A



"The clerk, maddened with liquor and frenzied with passion, crept stealthily on to the piazza, armed with a double-barreled gun."

light curtain concealed the persons in the room from the evil eye peering through the window. A drunken vagabond, though capable of doing little good, carries in his hand a terrible capacity for mischief. A shot prompted by frenzy snuffs out an existence just as effectually as a cannon-ball or an earthquake. Yet, while not boastful of courage, the special agent experienced not a particle of fear. With a certain clairvoyant insight, vague, ill-defined, shadowy, but firmly trusted, he felt assured that the black-hearted wretch, with rage and desperation goading him to madness, was too great a coward to shoot except from an ambush. Murder black as midnight fired his heart, but perhaps a dozen hidden eyes swept that piazza. The party kept on with their work, and after a while

the desperado stole away. In a few minutes a gun was heard on the public square, followed at intervals by another and another till late into the dead hours of night.

The reader may ask why an armed ruffian was permitted without hinderance to patrol the streets of the village, disturbing the peace and terrifying the timorous. The question is more easily put than answered. The sheriff, an officer of courage and determination, appeared rather reluctant to grapple the problem, while others, however much incensed at the latest outbreak of the diabolism that had long held them in dread, found a ready excuse for inaction in the plea that as private citizens, not specially charged with the preservation of order, they could not be expected to repress the disturbance.

By the dangerous toleration extended to cut-throats, the South has been greatly, and in a measure unjustly, scandalized in the eyes of the civilized world. An overwhelming majority of her people in the rural districts, which are supposed to be the hotbeds of turbulence and disorder, are peaceful, law-abiding, and humane. Behind the North in education, and in the spirit of aggressive benevolence that finds expression in missionary enterprises abroad, and in the establishment of manifold institutions of charity at home, the people of the South to a much greater degree rest content to do good as it comes in their way, being passive rather than active in efforts for the advancement of society. Life in its varied phases is much more isolated and individual, with far less tendency to gregariousness and co-operation. Hence, instead of pouncing collectively upon desperadoes through the arm of the law, upheld and strengthened by a healthy public sentiment, they too often stand aloof, venting their wrath in secret and harmless maledictions. Many a ruffian, stained with the blood of repeated murders, walks unpunished in the arena of his crimes, a prolonged scourge and terror to the neighborhood. The courage that can storm a battery without a tremor relaxes fearfully in the presence of bravo

and pistols. So long as such lawlessness and violence are permitted to exist, the communities that endure them will suffer more in reputation from what they neglect than from what they do—from the sin of omission than from the sin of commission. The evil, aggravated by the radical transition through which society was passing, will, it is to be hoped, rapidly disappear with the growth of population, the diffusion of intelligence, and, under more liberal institutions, with the healing operations of time.

The sheriff, and the gentleman placed in temporary charge of the office, were urged to treat the deposed postmaster with particular kindness and attention, with the view of so far winning her confidence as to elicit a full statement of the truth. The special agent entertained also the higher hope that, feeling she was not altogether an outcast in the world, others sharing a common humanity stood ready to stretch out to her across the dark abyss a hand of help and sympathy, she might be drawn back to the better life whence her erring feet had strayed. In the detection of crime, the collapse which threatens ruin, overwhelming and irretrievable, to the wrong-doer, may be the means of reclaiming him to virtue and usefulness.

Under the influence, partly of shame and partly of the furtive persuasions of the man who had wronged her so deeply, she maintained for several weeks an attitude of silence or denial. Meanwhile the court term was fast approaching, and the late clerk, unable longer to bear the suspense,—

“Folded his tent like an Arab, and silently stole away.”

On the assembling of the grand jury, the facts were laid before them, and they found a true bill against the woman. This step was taken with the full concurrence of the United States district attorney, not with the view of bringing her to trial, but to induce a confession. During the interim, the policy of kindness had been pursued assiduously and with success. Moreover, the flight of her confederate removed

the terror that had paralyzed her resolution, and held her in bondage to continual fear. She began to see that the path of truth was the easiest to tread, and that those who were exhorting her to candor and truthfulness were really her best friends.

A few days later the special agent was not at all surprised to receive a telegram saying that she wished to meet him in Atlanta, and that she had determined to make a complete disclosure of the facts.

At the appointed time she appeared promptly, with many tears and deep humiliation telling the story of her compact with the fugitive, and of the crimes and miseries which ensued. During the period that her late husband was postmaster, the public had no ground for complaint, the work of the office having been performed promptly and honestly. At his death she applied for the appointment, and it was given to her. For a while every thing moved on well, but in an evil moment she accepted the clerical aid of the man whose personal beauty and desperate fortunes seemed to fascinate her, and as the arch Tempter blasted the happiness of Eden, the wily scoundrel destroyed her peace, tyrannized over her actions, and having committed her to his villainous policy, continued to hold her in subjection by force of superior will. He led the way to robbery by gradual ascent, beginning with opening letters of friendship for the purpose of prying into the personal and domestic secrets of the neighborhood. At this period he was particularly attracted to the correspondence of absent lovers, there being one or two spinsters whose occasional outbursts of adolescent tenderness threw him into convulsions of merriment. By constant practice he soon acquired great dexterity in unsealing letters, and took no little pride in the accomplishment. *Facilis decensus Averni.* Jordan may be a hard road to travel, but smooth is the slide to perdition. It is but a step from stealing the secrets of others to stealing their money. He soon proposed to the postmaster a regular and systematic plan of robbery, to be

accompanied by an equitable division of the profits. He was to do the work, and the two were to share the plunder equally. At first she trembled at the naked proposition, skillfully as the way had been prepared for it, but so completely was she enveloped in the toils of the tempter, that, after a brief period of feeble hesitation, with closed eyes she plunged madly into the vortex.

Disregarding the code of honor supposed to prevail among thieves, while robbing the public he defrauded his partner, pocketing all the booty, and holding, as a suspended banker, the assets of the concern, ready to receive deposits, but not to honor checks. On a single occasion he disgorged fifty dollars to meet a draft from the department. Out of the hundreds stolen, this was the only money paid over to her. He took great pride in his skill in the art of humbug, and, had it not been for the multiplicity of the losses and the bad character of the operator, might long have deceived the credulous by his jugglery. A single instance will illustrate his style. A farmer, living several miles in the country, was looking for a valuable letter from Virginia, and made one or two inquiries at the office in regard to it. The clerk had a spite against the gentleman, and as he allowed personal feelings to influence him considerably in the selection of victims, concluded that a fine opportunity was now presented, both for replenishing his exchequer and for taking a few dollars' worth of revenge. The expected missive at length arrived, in the shape of a registered letter, which was at once dexterously slipped out of sight under the table to await future manipulation. At night it was opened, rifled, and resealed. On the arrival of the mail the following day, the end of the package envelope, which was so placed as to appear to have been emptied out of the bag, was cut off a second time, and the unfortunate letter ostentatiously displayed to the crowd around the window, to attract attention to its mutilated appearance. Thus the evidence of half a dozen disinterested witnesses was extemporized to divert suspicion from the actual criminal.

The daughter had not been let into the secret of the compact, and the confederates had striven to keep the thefts from her knowledge. She had seen the clerk, however, open letters from motives of curiosity, and had often heard the contents discussed.

The grand jury, after listening to the statements of mother and daughter, corroborated as they were by collateral evidence, did not hesitate to indict the late clerk.



"She had seen the clerk open letters, and had often heard the contents discussed."

It now devolved upon the officers of the government to discover the asylum of the fugitive, and to bring him back for trial. Broad as the country is, it is not big enough to hide a criminal when diligently pursued. Everywhere the light of Heaven streams in to reveal the brand upon the brow of the malefactor. The "damned spot" will not "out." All the perfume in Arabia will not sweeten the tainted hand.

Through the exertions of the sheriff of the county the officers of the government soon learned that friends of the absentee, living in a precinct ten or twelve miles distant from the scene of the robberies, were communicating quite frequently with one "John Jones," of Nashville, Tennessee. Jones required money and clothing, which were duly forwarded. A great many good people have had correspondents at Nashville, Tennessee, without attracting attention or arousing suspicion thereby. Not so in this instance. Plain farmers tilling the earth amid the graves of their sires, and seldom venturing beyond the shadows of their native hills, are not suddenly so drawn to a new and distant friend as to part with hard-earned substance to relieve his needs. Besides, running back for several generations, the name of the correspondent did not suggest the tie of consanguinity. Unconnected with his benefactors by business or blood, who could he be? The clue pointed unerringly to the man they were after.

The original John Jones, as every one knows, is a gentleman of eminent respectability, proud of the family escutcheon, and super-sensitive in regard to any taint, however slight, that might befall the ancestral cognomen. He would never forgive the government if it failed to apprehend the miscreant who crowned his other offences by filching this illustrious name to masquerade in before the world.

The United States chief deputy-marshal for the northern district of Georgia sent a warrant for the arrest of "Jones," with a full description of his appearance, to the United States marshal at Nashville, requesting immediate action. That officer telegraphed back that a person answering to the description had been in Nashville, but had just left for Kansas City. The presumptions were that he was "on the fly," but would remain long enough to receive letters and an express package to be forwarded from his late haunt. Accordingly the same particulars were telegraphed to the United States marshal at Kansas City with a similar request. The despatch reached its destination a few minutes in advance of the distinguished stranger,

who in less than half an hour after its receipt alighted from the train. The officer addressed him cordially, calling him by name. "Why! how are you, old fellow? I am glad to see you," said he; "in fact, I came down to the depot on purpose to meet you, but hardly expected you on this run."

"There must be some mistake here," replied the dust-stained traveler, with a look of ill-concealed apprehension. "I am John Jones, of Nashville, Tennessee, and a stranger to your acquaintance."

"John Jones, of Nashville, Tennessee! How long since?" ejaculated the marshal, with a slight accent of derision.

"Do you mean to insult me, sir?" replied the fugitive, with assumed severity. "This joke, if you mean it for a joke, has been pushed far enough already. I am not a man to be trifled with, as you may find to your sorrow."

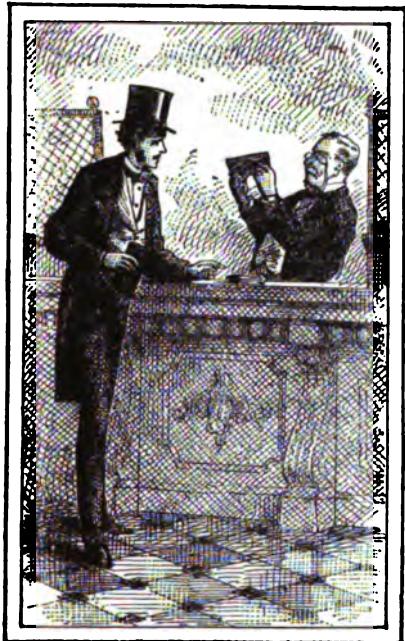
"You would make a pretty fair actor," answered the imperturbable officer. "You talk very well, too; but I haven't time to listen to any more of that sort just now. I know all about you, and what you have done. I am United States marshal, and you are my prisoner. I take it you do not care to be the hero of a street scene. Give up like a gentleman, and you shall be treated accordingly."

For a brief interval the captive attempted to play the rôle of injured and indignant innocence; but, finding the game useless, acknowledged that he was beaten, and admitted his identity. So accurate was the description that the marshal pronounced it equal to a photograph. That night the fugitive started homeward with an iron bracelet on his wrist.

On various pretexts the trial was postponed from term to term till two and a half years had elapsed from the finding of the indictment. It was then discovered that the indictment was defective, but it was too late to go before another grand jury and procure a substitute, as such action was barred by the statute of limitations. After a partial introduction of the evidence, the prosecution broke down on purely technical grounds, having no relation whatever to the guilt or inno-

cence of the accused. Accordingly, through the "law's delay," and not through lack of proof, the prisoner managed to escape. After all, the real punishment does not depend on the verdict of a jury or the length of an imprisonment. Retribution, inevitable, far-reaching, is an integral part of every crime. No earthly decree or failure can annul God's eternal law, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

Self-Connected.



The Teller declines to accept the bill.

ASCALON, a quiet and orderly village of about five thousand inhabitants, is located on one of the many railroads that radiate from Chicago. It was originally laid out as a university town by prominent members of a powerful religious denomination; and by special charter the sale of liquor within the corporate limits was for ever prohibited. In addition to the university, other institutions of learning have since been erected under the patronage of the wealthy; and the citizens take great pride in the education, culture, and morality which generally prevail.

From time to time reports of lost letters, mailed to and from Ascalon, reached Mr. U. R. Hawley, special agent at Chicago; but these were hardly frequent enough to discredit the management of the post-office, as a certain percentage of mistakes and miscarriages is proved by long expe-

rience to occur through the carelessness of writers. Thus matters ran on till at length a decisive case fixed the responsibility at that place. A letter directed to a contractor temporarily employed in Ascalon was handed at the train in Chicago to a postal clerk whose route supplied the town. It did not reach its destination. The matter was reported for investigation.

If not mislaid, the letter must have been stolen either by the postal clerk or in the Ascalon office ; and for reasons which seemed sufficient, the special agent concluded that the depreciation was not committed on the railroad.

Virgil Swayne, a thin, sickly man, about thirty-two years old, of nervous and excitable temperament, was postmaster. Anxious to please the public and to be reputed efficient, he was thrown into a fever of perturbation by complaints or adverse criticism.

At the time referred to, Swayne was assisted by two clerks : one a young lady of irreproachable character, who for quite a period had been detained at home by severe illness, and the other a young man of twenty-six, known as Rodney Powell.

Powell was an orphan, and had lived in Ascalon from boyhood, having been reared in the family of an estimable gentleman where he was surrounded by the best of influences. So far as externals went, he was such a youth as decorous and devout maidens like to hold up to boisterous, irrepres-



Virgil Swayne.

sible, mischievous nephews as a model for imitation. A member of the church and teacher in the Sunday school, he had no evil associations or questionable habits. He did not drink under any circumstances of temptation, or use tobacco. Industrious and economical, he saved each month something from his salary, which was gradually transformed into town-lots in the suburbs, where land could be bought at low figures and held with confidence for a rise. He kept a bank account, carefully depositing his monthly gains till the aggregate became sufficiently large to be withdrawn for investment.

In physique Powell was tall, slender, and cadaverous, a candidate evidently for early translation to a better sphere. About a year prior to the occurrences to be narrated, he had married a beautiful and interesting girl from Wisconsin, and after twelve months of happiness she had returned home to visit her parents. The prospects of the young couple looked as bright as a May morning.

One vice, however, tainted the life of Rodney Powell, and slowly but surely the poison permeated his moral nature. It was avarice, hidden from the public, and perhaps from the victim, under the name of economy.

When the office at Ascalon came under surveillance, in view of the excellent reputation of both the postmaster and the assistant, suspicion might fall upon one as readily as upon the other; but quiet inquiry developed the fact that the current savings of Powell were larger than the severest economy could explain on the theory that the increasing accumulations were honestly derived.

A letter was prepared for the purpose of testing the honesty of the assistant. It contained a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill and two genuine one-dollar bills, so marked that all could be readily identified. The special agent took due care to see it placed in the package for Ascalon. The letter was so directed that while it would offer no temptation to an honest man, it would be very likely to stimulate into activity the propensities of a thief.

The next day the officer, avoiding the post-office himself, sent a shrewd, experienced, clear-headed man to inquire for the missive. Waiting till Powell was left alone in the temporary absence of the postmaster, the messenger walked up to the delivery-window, and asked if there was anything for "Abraham Klingman."



"Look again," urged the lynx-eyed messenger."

explanation of the mystery, "There is another Ascalon clear out west. Perhaps your letter has gone there through mistake."

Unwittingly the moth had fluttered into the flame ; the suggestion, under the circumstances, being equivalent, morally, to a confession. When the interview was reported to the special agent, he knew that Powell was a thief. Having, however, been detained the day before by an unexpected summons to attend court, he had been prevented from following the letter

"No," stammered the assistant, running through a package with tremulous hands, and turning as white as a sheet, "there is nothing for you."

"Look again," urged the lynx-eyed messenger. "I have notice that a very important communication was mailed to me yesterday from Chicago. It must be here."

Once more the clerk, half unconsciously, looked through the bundle, and repeated the denial.

As the stranger turned away with a look of assumed disappointment, the young man remarked,

as closely as he otherwise would, and hence decided, on the ground of prudence, to try another test. Perhaps the contents were already spent. If so, the legal evidence was gone, and against the unsullied reputation of the assistant nothing short of the most conclusive proof would avail.

One great point had been gained. The character of Rodney Powell, heretofore concealed under professions of piety, was now thoroughly understood by one man at least. In the absence of all small vices, he was afflicted with an inordinate love of money, and lacked the strength of will to resist temptation. The wretch who steals once, will steal again. It seemed better to sacrifice the venture already lost, and postpone the crisis a few days, rather than to hazard the success of the case on an arrest that might prove premature.

The agent returned to Chicago, and delayed further proceedings for a week or two, to permit the clerk to recover from his late fright. In the second move on the works of the young man, he decided to take the postmaster into his confidence, as his co-operation was important, though apprehensive that his excitability would expose the plan of operations to the thief. Swayne was instructed to show no signs of uneasiness, and not to notice the movements of the assistant while both were employed in the office together, but to keep a vigilant lookout for certain letters when left alone, and, if either one should be missed, to telegraph the fact immediately to the special agent in Chicago. Several decoys were prepared with the full knowledge of the postmaster, and in due course of mail thrown into Ascalon. Some of them received honorable treatment. One, which should have been returned to the railway post-office as missent, was carefully laid aside in an unused pigeon-hole. The appearance of the missive suggested a plethora of greenbacks, yet the wary thief evidently surmised that it might possibly contain a charge of postal dynamite. At all events, it was handled very daintily.

Diligent but quiet search was meanwhile made for the

stolen money. The twenty-dollar counterfeit note was so well executed that none but experts would be likely to distrust its genuineness. It was soon ascertained that the day after the arrival of the first decoy, Powell made a deposit in bank. The teller remembered that among the bills was one of twenty dollars on the Oneida County Bank, which he declined to pass to the credit of the customer without further examination. At his suggestion, Powell put a private mark on the bill, and the teller subsequently submitted it in person to the cashier of the Merchants National Bank of Chicago, who pronounced it a counterfeit. It was afterwards returned to Powell. Though the circumstances did not absolutely identify this as one of the stolen notes, there could be no reasonable doubt of the fact.

Unaccustomed to watch rogues, Swayne soon found the tortures of the situation unbearable. The anxiety which he tried to conceal became only the more conspicuous from the effort. Postmaster and clerk furtively shot strange glances at each other, while a barrier of coolness and mistrust insensibly arose to separate the two friends. Without a word spoken to justify or explain the changed attitude of affairs, both manifested a conscious expectation that a catastrophe of some kind was impending. Nerves weak at best gave way under the strain. Worn out by solicitude and sleeplessness, Swayne left one afternoon precipitately for Chicago to consult the special agent, taking the test letter along, and expressing the conviction that Powell was afraid to steal it. The conclusion, so confidently expressed, proved to be entirely erroneous.

After the departure of the postmaster, the clerk went to the case for the purpose of confiscating the estray, but it had disappeared. Conscience and fear at once sounded an alarm. Recollections of the unexpected inquiries from "Abraham Klingman," reinforced by numerous evidences of distrust on the part of the postmaster, formerly so artless and confiding, led the thief to surmise that his criminality

was suspected if not discovered. A new resolution was soon formed with the view of escaping, if possible, from the impending crash. Without disclosing his purpose to any one, Powell proceeded to draw his balance from bank, and left by the midnight train. On arriving at the office the next morning, Swayne found the doors closed, and on further inquiry learned that the exemplary youth whose business it was to put the place in order, had incontinently fled.

The special agent was at once informed of the latest developments, when he proceeded to modify the plan of campaign to meet the somewhat unexpected emergency.

That Powell still retained the counterfeit in his possession or under his control was exceedingly probable, as he would be afraid to pass a bill of such size, and hence so easily followed, in a community where its true character had been pronounced at the bank, and as he would not be likely to destroy an imitation that so closely resembled the genuine.

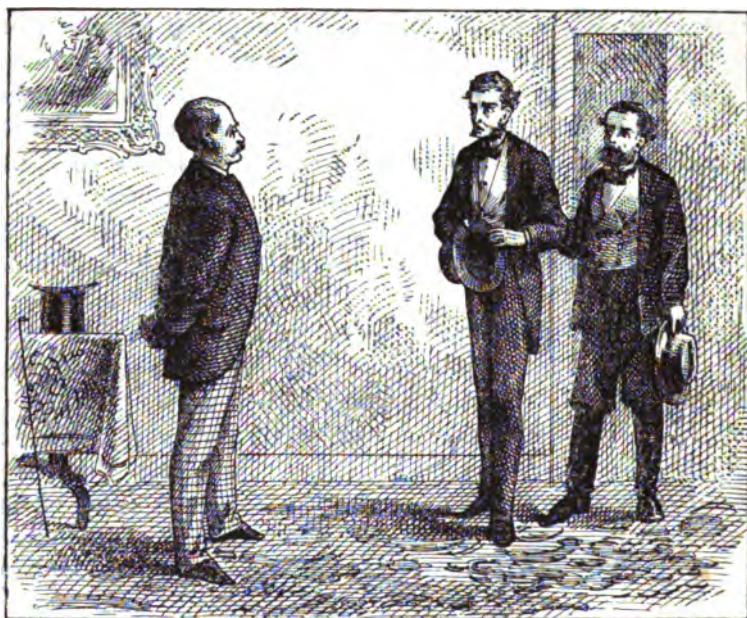
Conjecturing that the fugitive would rejoin his wife, Mr. Hawley communicated with Mr. Horatio Belden, postmaster at Wartrace, the residence of her parents, inquiring whether Powell was there. An affirmative reply was returned. No time was to be lost. Since the thief had permanently severed his connections with the Ascalon office, the only remaining chance of detection was through the recovery of the counterfeit, and bank-bills are proverbially slippery.

Hurriedly taking the train, Mr. Hawley reached Wartrace about the middle of the afternoon. After looking over the field, he decided to charge Powell with being a counterfeiter, and, in carrying out the scheme, to assume the character of an agent of the treasury department. It was now late in the day, and the execution of his plan was postponed till the next morning.

After breakfast, the sheriff of the county, whose aid had been secured, repaired to the house where Powell stopped,

and took him to the hotel. On the way he was informed that an officer of the treasury wished to see him. Entirely thrown off the scent, he went without fear or hesitation,—rather curious to learn what use a representative of that branch of the government could have for him.

The two met for the first time in the private room of Mr. Hawley, the late clerk quiet and expectant, little dreaming of the serious import of the interview, and the officer of the law



"You are a dealer in counterfeit money."

determined, if possible, to compel the thief to disclose the evidence which would convict him in a court of justice. As the young man entered, the occupant of the room brusquely accosted him, "You are Rodney Powell, I believe."

"I am, sir."

"You are a dealer in counterfeit money."

"No, sir, I am not."

Both were standing, the officer harsh and stern, the criminal pale, faltering, and cadaverous. So great was his surprise at the suddenness of the onset, that he could hardly articulate from nervousness and timidity.

Agent. "You have been a clerk in a post-office, and have been fool enough to be duped by the circulars advertising counterfeit money."

Clerk. "No, sir. I never saw any such circulars."

Agent. "Where did you get your counterfeit money?"

Clerk. "I never had a counterfeit bill in my life. I will show you my pocket-book," taking it out.

With one sharp look at the contents the agent waived it away contemptuously, saying, "I don't care anything about your pocket-book. I don't suppose you carry your stock there. I want to know where your counterfeit money comes from."

Clerk. "I never had any."

Agent. "Didn't you try to pass a counterfeit twenty at Hamilton's Bank?"

Clerk. "Well, that is the only one I ever had."

Agent. "That one is enough to send you to the penitentiary. Where did you afterwards pass the bill?"

Clerk. "I have not passed it."

Agent. "You have not destroyed it?"

Clerk. "No, sir."

Agent. "What have you done with it, then?"

Clerk. "I gave it to my wife."

Agent. "Did you give her any other money at the same time?"

Clerk. "Yes, sir."

Agent. "Was it genuine or counterfeit?"

Clerk. "It was genuine."

Agent. "Did you tell her that this twenty was counterfeit?"

Clerk. "No, sir."

Agent. "You cowardly scoundrel, you gave it to her, an innocent woman, to put in circulation because you lacked the courage. Didn't you expect that she would pass it?"

Clerk. "I don't know that I did."

Agent. "On that point, then, it seems that I am better informed than you, for I do. You may as well prepare at once to go with me to the capital of the state, to stand trial for knowingly passing counterfeit money in violation of law."

Clerk. "I guess my wife still has the bill, and that I can get it for you."

Agent. "I do not believe any such thing. You gave it to her, intending that she should pay it to some unsuspecting merchant or creditor, and she has innocently done so. Still, I should like to know into whose hands it went, for it is too dangerous a counterfeit to be left in circulation. If found, you will be compelled to redeem the bill. Yet one might as well hunt for a needle in a hay-stack as look for it."

Clerk. "I am confident the bill can be found. Let me go home, and I think I can soon return with it."

Agent. "You can not go alone, as you are now in custody, but I will accompany you to give you every chance possible."

The unexpected accusation, vigorously followed up by the special agent, had thoroughly cowed the thief, who was weak and timid at best. Believing that the production of the counterfeit would satisfy the officer and end the investigation, he was exceedingly anxious to recover the note. The two started for Powell's house, about a mile off. As they passed the post-office, the special agent made an excuse to stop, and desiring the presence of a witness, invited Mr. Belden, the postmaster, to accompany them. He acceded readily to the request, having previously been informed that his services might be needed; and the three proceeded on together.

Mrs. Powell, a pure and lovable woman, eminently worthy of a better husband and happier fate, was up-stairs, confined to her room by sickness. So long as the guilty man remained in ignorance of the ulterior object of the mission,

there was no danger that he would attempt either to escape or to destroy the bill. Indeed, so eager was he to produce the counterfeit, that his thoughts and energies were swallowed up in the effort. Powell soon returned from the sick-chamber paler even than before, and remarked, dejectedly, "She has passed the bill."

Agent. "I knew it. You gave it to her for that very purpose. Enough of this nonsense. Come with me; we have wasted too much time already. Whom did she pay it to?"

Clerk. "To Doctor Sevier."

Agent. "What for?"

Clerk. "Medical attendance."

Agent. "What did the medical bill amount to?"

Clerk. "Ten dollars."

Agent. "Did the doctor give back the change?"

Clerk. "Yes, sir."

Agent. "What did I tell you at the outset? Yet you had the effrontery to stand up and say that you had not passed counterfeit money! It was incomparably worse to commit the crime through the agency of a poor sick woman, who trusted implicitly in your integrity, than to have gone forth boldly among men to do the same thing in person. The indirection adds a hundred-fold to the cowardice and baseness of the act."

Clerk. "Allow me the chance, and I will hunt up and redeem the bill."

Agent. "Nonsense. It may have gone through a dozen hands before now."

Clerk (imploringly). "Still, you will permit me to try, will you not?"

Agent. "Yes, you can try. That counterfeit must not be left in circulation."

Powell now fully believed that the only escape from the penitentiary was through the discovery and redemption of the missing note. Perhaps even that would prove insufficient. His eagerness to see Doctor Sevier was intense, the officer

meanwhile saying but little, and that little of a discouraging tendency.

On their way back, the party called at the office of Doctor Sevier, but he happened to be absent in the country on professional business. Mr. Belden suggested that they should wait at the post-office; and thither they accordingly repaired, having left a request for the doctor to follow immediately on his return.

In the course of an hour, or an hour and a half, the doctor entered the rear room at the post-office. A man of heavy frame and clear conscience, a physician of skill and of extensive practice, he wore the look of a solid country gentleman, at peace with himself and with all the world. The conversation between the several persons grouped around the table was brief and pointed. On one side stood Powell, pale and anxious; then Belden, a little nervous, in view of the approaching crisis; next the doctor, somewhat surprised at the unusual summons, but perfectly calm; and last, the special agent, steadily pursuing the plan of operations which was now drawing to a successful close.

The officer broke the silence by inquiring, "Doctor Sevier, did Mrs. Powell pay you a twenty-dollar note a short time ago?"

Doctor. "I believe she did."

Agent. "Your bill for services was ten dollars, if I am correctly informed?"

Doctor. "Yes."

Agent. "You returned the change to Mrs. Powell."

Doctor. "Yes."

Agent. "That twenty is a counterfeit."

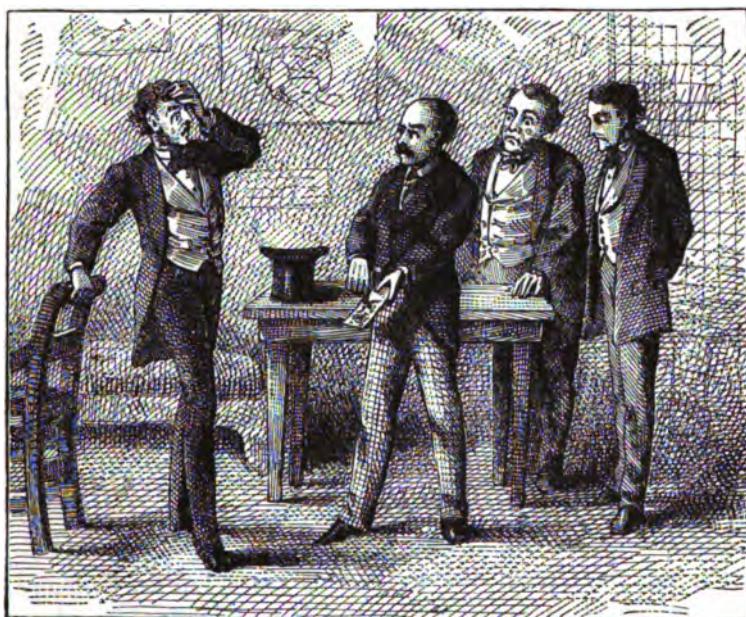
Doctor. "Is it possible?"

Agent. "Yes, doctor, it is a fact. I am particularly anxious to secure that bill. Have you got it still?"

Doctor. "I don't know. I have lately been saving money to pay taxes with, and may have it yet."

Doctor Sevier drew forth a well-stuffed pocket-book, sug-

gestive of a large practice and good customers. Taking therefrom a roll of bills, he spread them out deliberately on the table, and began to search for the counterfeit. All eyes were riveted on the package. As the portion below the fold grew thinner, the countenance of the young man fell. What if the doctor had parted with it? The frowning walls of a prison again loomed ominously on his mental horizon. As the doctor turned further, he came to a twenty. The



"I will tell you where you got it. You stole it from a letter."

special agent quickly placed the tip of his index finger on the bill. He was an old acquaintance, and perfectly familiar with its features. With slight emphasis, he remarked, "There is the bill."

The doctor drew it forth and handed it to Powell, who also at once recognized the lineaments that he had had occasion to study so closely. With an air of great relief, he exclaimed, "Yes, this is the identical bill."

The turn of the special agent had now come. Taking the fateful piece of paper, and pointing to some writing on one corner, he inquired, "Is not that the mark made by you in Hamilton's Bank?"

"Yes, sir," replied Powell.

"And there is my mark," thundered the special agent, pointing to three initials, in fine characters, on the reverse side. "Now, let me ask, where did you get that bill?"

Clerk. "At Ascalon."

Agent. "From whom?"

Clerk. "I do not remember."

Agent. "Do you receive so many twenty-dollar bills that you can not remember from whom you took this one?"

Clerk. "I don't remember."

Agent. "Did Virgil Swayne give it to you?"

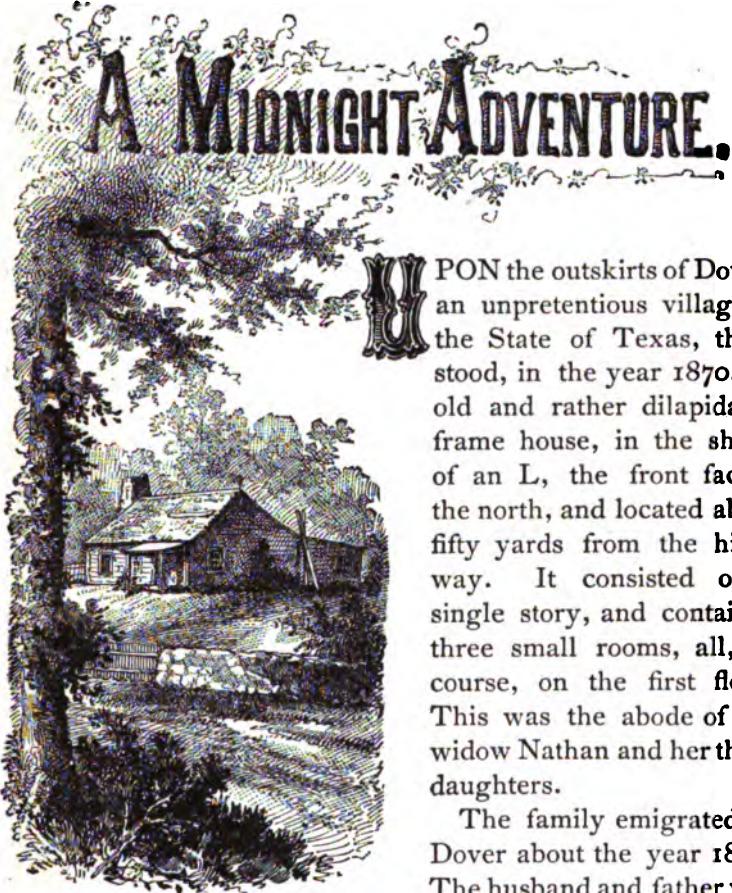
Clerk. "No, sir."

Agent. "I will tell you where you got it. You stole it from a letter addressed to Abraham Klingman. What did you do with the two one-dollar notes enclosed in the same letter?"

Clerk. "I spent them in Ascalon."

And thus the poor wretch, after many falsehoods, seeing that further resistance was useless, threw up the sponge, and admitted his guilt. With the last words, he sank down on the lounge, a self-convicted thief.

On the next train, the avaricious clerk left for Chicago, a prisoner. When arraigned at the bar of justice, he pleaded guilty, and was duly sentenced to the penitentiary.



The Home of the Nathans.

U

PON the outskirts of Dover, an unpretentious village in the State of Texas, there stood, in the year 1870, an old and rather dilapidated frame house, in the shape of an L, the front facing the north, and located about fifty yards from the highway. It consisted of a single story, and contained three small rooms, all, of course, on the first floor. This was the abode of the widow Nathan and her three daughters.

The family emigrated to Dover about the year 1850. The husband and father was duly installed as the village

blacksmith, and though work poured into his shop in abundance, to comfort and peace he was a stranger. Poor man! He knew how to soften and bend iron, but could make no impression, either by remonstrance or kindness, upon the hard and ferocious spirit of his wife. Driven to despair by the

venom of her manner and tongue, he sought oblivion in drink, and was at length turned out of doors to die forsaken and broken-hearted.

The widow was left with five children, — two sons and three daughters. The elder boy became a teamster in the federal army, and died near the close of the war. The younger murdered a neighbor for speaking disparagingly of his sister, and, to avoid the halter of Judge Lynch, vanished in the night. For many years the family had a hard struggle to exist; but neither privations nor sufferings subdued the obdurate heart of Mrs. Nathan. The household led a secluded, isolated life, for the community regarded them with suspicion and dread.

As might be inferred, Mrs. Nathan wasted little sympathy on neighbors who treated her with so much coldness and contempt. She exulted in the final triumph of the Union arms, for defeat brought humiliation to those who had trampled on her pride.

In due time a detachment of federal troops was sent to Dover, to preserve the peace and superintend the affairs of the freedmen. The lieutenant in command soon made the acquaintance of the Nathans, becoming interested in their welfare on account of their professed loyalty to the government. While he was stationed here the postmaster resigned, and through the influence of the lieutenant, Miss Eleanore, the eldest of the Nathan sisters, was appointed to fill the place.

A most extraordinary change was soon visible in the condition of the family. Abundance succeeded want, the tokens of outward prosperity multiplying as the months rolled swiftly by. Old debts were paid, homespun dresses discarded for silks, and the varied paraphernalia of modern luxury rapidly added to the hitherto scant wardrobes of the ladies. People, seeing the sudden transformation, wondered how an annual salary of four hundred dollars could be made to go so far. Ere long, evil whisperings were heard. Many did not hesitate to say that there was something wrong in the post-office, yet

few of the good citizens of Dover had reason to complain, for, if light fingers were busy with the mails, letters belonging to that immediate locality were rarely disturbed. The counties beyond, whose correspondence passed through Dover, were not so fortunate; but the sufferers seldom reported their troubles to the department, from an erroneous belief that no attention would be paid to the matter. Thus affairs went on for two years and a half, till August, 1870; the current expenses of the Nathans far exceeding the legitimate income from the office. Meanwhile occasional efforts were made to secure the removal of Miss Eleanore, but the lieutenant was always appealed to, and, wherever he was, uniformly responded with a strong indorsement of the postmaster. She also wrote frequent letters of appeal to the appointing power, and, with the aid of her military friend, managed to retain the place in defiance of public protests.

As the summer of 1870 advanced, the pecuniary wants of the Nathans outgrew the ordinary sources of supply. Having long levied toll upon correspondence with impunity, the family had learned to look upon valuable letters passing through the office as a part of its perquisites; but ordinary letters now ceased to yield sufficient revenue to keep them afloat.

In August, a registered package containing over seven hundred dollars in money-order funds, mailed at Daleville, Texas, to St. Louis, Missouri, was rifled on the way. The case was referred by the department to Colonel Frederick W. Schaurte, special agent at St. Louis, for investigation, who, in October, passed over the entire route, traveling nine days by stage to reach his destination. With the aid of other data in his possession, Colonel Schaurte became convinced that the robbery was perpetrated at Dover, the focal point toward which a mass of evidence pointed. In that neighborhood he assumed the character of an officer from Missouri, in pursuit of a thief who was supposed to have fled to Texas with a large amount of money, a description of which he had. This gave him an excuse for examining the currency in the stores

and other places of business, but not one of the missing bills could he find.

Between the time of the robbery and of the arrival of the special agent, Miss Eleanore had been removed from office, and the new appointee had taken possession. During the period of her incumbency the entire family had free access to the mails, and either one might have committed the depredations, though the hardened character of the mother afforded sufficient ground for the belief that she instigated the crimes, and took the lead in their execution. However, as they no longer enjoyed the privilege of manipulating the letters of other people, the ordinary methods employed by special agents could not be followed. Accordingly the officer seemed to be driven to the alternative of either finding a portion of the stolen money and tracing it back to the thief, or of securing a *quasi* reinstatement of the late postmaster, so that an opportunity might be given to apply the usual tests to determine the question of honesty. The hunt for the lost bills, though thorough, proved unavailing, the notes, if paid out, having disappeared from the circulation of the neighborhood. With great reluctance, in view of the unpopularity of the step, the special agent arranged with the new appointee to employ the suspected parties temporarily as clerks, and to have the contents of certain letters examined after passing from their custody. Having laid out the plan of campaign, and given explicit instructions to the actual postmaster who was charged with its execution, he left the state, hoping soon to be informed of the complete success of the scheme.

The postmaster, however, proved entirely incompetent to manage a matter of so much delicacy, and, listening to the well-grounded remonstrances of the neighborhood, shortly resumed entire control of the office, abandoning in despair the unfamiliar and unpleasant functions of the detective.

In December of the same year, Colonel Schaurte was called to Arkansas to investigate certain losses, and having completed the work, decided to push on into Texas. The railroads

which have since made the northern part of the state easily accessible, were then barely more than projected. A journey in winter of several hundred miles by stage, through the deep, black, tenacious mud of that region, was a trial to test to the utmost the physical endurance of the strongest. The coaches were very uncomfortable, and often became so deeply mired that the passengers were compelled to pry out the wheels with



"The passengers were compelled to pry out the wheels with fence-rails."

fence-rails, and to walk over the worst parts of the way to relieve the horses of the load.

Despite the hardships of the journey, the unexplained robberies at Dover weighed so heavily on the mind of the officer that he could not consent to return home without one more effort to develop the mystery. Leaving Little Rock on the 9th, he reached his destination, worn out in body and mind, after ten days of continuous travel.



Manifestly, success could only be achieved through a lucky combination of stratagem and bluff. For a day or two the officer hovered between Dover and Daleville, throwing out hints and innuendoes intended for the ears of the Nathan family, and to excite apprehensions that some ill-defined but terrible disaster was about to fall like a thunderbolt upon the doomed household.

Calling upon Judge Lynch, one of the oldest and most famous members of the Texan judiciary, he procured warrants for the arrest of Mrs. Nathan and of Miss Eleanore, late postmaster. Thus equipped, he determined to proceed to the house alone, and, if possible, to frighten the guilty parties into a full confession. The mission was one of danger as well as delicacy.

It was a dark, stormy night, late in December. The raindrops, driven by a strong north-easterly wind, penetrated like hail. Threading his way through the unlighted street of the village, and along the desolate and deserted highway, the officer sought the residence

of the Nathans. For ten weary days he had traveled to get there; and now, as the crisis approached, the case seemed utterly hopeless. The mother challenged investigation, defying accusers of every name and station to do their worst. Cool, calculating, and cruel, was she likely to be terrified into a paroxysm of momentary weakness? As the special agent stepped into the path leading up to the door, is it strange that he mentally inquired why he had consented to journey so far and suffer so much on a fool's errand? So remote and desperate seemed the chances of success, so near the pain and peril, that one less resolute would have turned back even from the threshold. He knew that in the coming struggle for mastery he was to encounter a vindictive, implacable, remorseless termagant, who would not hesitate to commit murder if in the frenzy of the moment she conceived that the blood of an adversary would contribute to her safety.

Having scraped the mud from his boots, he knocked at the door, and was admitted by one of the younger daughters. Somewhat to his surprise he was received with a great show of affability, and invited to a seat in the family circle around the open hearth. The mother, then about fifty years of age, was rather above the medium height, strongly built, with muscles and sinews like an athlete, with dark, fierce, restless eyes, thin, compressed lips, and a countenance that could readily flame into passion, but never melt into tenderness — a veritable Lady Macbeth in low life. Miss Eleanore was perhaps twenty-three, slender in form, and rather comely in feature. The other daughters, aged respectively eighteen and sixteen, were fair specimens of uncultivated frontier beauty.

The officer knew that the family hated him most cordially, and, what was of more importance on the present occasion, he had good reason to believe that they feared him also.

The evening was considerably advanced when he arrived. Accepting the proffered chair, he regarded the mother and eldest daughter with a serious, melancholy look, as if he would like to evade a painful duty, but could not. From

commonplaces the conversation was gradually directed to ordinary mail matters, and thence by easy stages to the detection and punishment of post-office thieves. Going into minute details, the special agent related the incidents of a robbery, and step by step showed how the damning proofs of guilt were wound around the criminal like the coils of an anaconda till escape became impossible. In due time the wretch was arraigned for trial, when the whole story was brought out before the jury and the people of the vicinage. Alone, in a conspicuous box, with hundreds of eager eyes fixed on him, stood the prisoner, with no one near to drop a word of sympathy or look of pity. The crimes proved in open court lay like an impassable gulf between that unhappy man and the associates of a lifetime.

Having heard the evidence, the jury returned a verdict of "guilty," and the judge sentenced the robber to a term of ten years in the penitentiary. Then the lonely horrors, the sunless gloom of the prison, were described. Ten years in such a place! Who but a hardened brute could endure it and survive?

As the narrative ran on, the circle around the hearth grew narrower, the women edging their chairs together as if safety might be promoted by closer companionship. Meanwhile the rain continued to beat against the window-panes, and the winds to howl around the house-corners. Amid the variety of dismal sounds, the limbs of an ancient shade-tree, rubbed by the gale against the side of the building, made a heavy, grating noise that impressed the visitor with the feeling that the place itself, as a punishment for the misdeeds of its occupants, was haunted and accursed.

After the story came to an end, Mrs. Nathan nervously ordered the two younger girls into the next room to bed. Possibly they knew nothing of the irregular practices carried on in the post-office, and the mother wished to keep them in ignorance. The agitated manner of Mrs. Nathan and of Miss Eleanore indicated that the arrows from the quiver of the

officer had struck upon vulnerable material, causing terror, if not rousing to energy the stings of conscience that had long lain dormant.

From the character of the complaints the special agent was able to form a pretty correct theory of the manner in which the depredations began in the office at Dover, and of how they afterwards continued to multiply and expand. Familiarity with the mental operations and moral decline of the dishonest who actually yield to thieving propensities, also enabled him to comprehend the processes of thought and the stages of feeling through which the principal actors had successively passed.

When quiet was restored, the special agent proceeded to outline the incidents of another case, supposed to have happened some time before in the western part of Arkansas. In this instance, the postmaster was a young lady loyally devoted to the Union, but impoverished by the war, with a mother and several sisters dependent upon her exertions for support. At heart the poor girl was honest and honorable, fully intending to do right, but the salary of the office was so small, and the needs of the family so great, that in a moment of supreme temptation she broke open and rifled a letter passing through her hands. The contents, however, brought no permanent relief, and, having once sinned, though with great reluctance and pain, she was soon induced to repeat the act. Other robberies followed in quick succession, till the clamors of the public reached the department, when the narrator was instructed to investigate the losses. On reaching the scene of action, he found that the unhappy girl was indeed guilty, for he soon came into possession of overwhelming proofs of the fact. Here it was that a most distressing dilemma was presented to him. As a faithful officer of the government, it was his duty to bring the offender to punishment; as a man, with a heart full of compassion for the erring and penitent, he shrunk from the responsibility of laying the heavy hand of the law upon an inexperienced girl who had strayed from the

path of rectitude not from badness of nature, but in a mistaken effort to provide food and clothing for the helpless.

"And what did you do with her?" inquired Miss Eleanore, with palpitating eagerness, interrupting the narrative of which but a brief outline is here given.

"When brought to realize the enormity of her offense," answered the officer, "she did all that a penitent sinner could — confessed the facts and restored the money still remaining in her possession. In view of the apparent, and I have no doubt real sincerity of her repentance, and of the restitution of the stolen property, I did not molest her freedom, but dismissed the charges with the simple injunction to the offender to go and sin no more. Perhaps I did wrong; perhaps I stretched the privileges of my office too far. It may be I had no right to save from prison a helpless girl. If I made a mistake, however, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I erred in a conscientious endeavor under difficult circumstances to act for the best."

Meanwhile Mrs. Nathan had risen from her seat, and, with arms folded behind her back after the manner of men, was slowly pacing the room, trying either to find transient forgetfulness in motion, or to sharpen her perceptions by muscular exercise. Another turn brought her directly in front of the special agent, and, looking into his eye with a searching gaze, she inquired, in a voice that betrayed the utmost anxiety, "What does all this mean? For God's sake, tell me what you intend to do! I have heard a good many things during the past few days, and want to know the worst. Nothing can be harder to bear than this suspense."

In solemn tones, trembling with assumed emotion, the special agent replied, "Rest assured, madam, I shall aim to make your burden as light as possible, and to spare you from trouble and humiliation so far as my obligations to the government will permit. Still, be my individual feelings what they may, as an officer I must do my duty."

"Tell me all at once," she exclaimed, clasping her hands

so firmly together that the blood was driven from the fingers ; " tell me all ! "

" Madam," replied he, " it is a power higher than I that speaks. A warrant for the arrest of you and Miss Eleanore arrived to-day, and I am charged with its execution."

While speaking, he drew the parchment from his pocket, and deliberately unfolded it. The document looked more like



" Mrs. Nathan, with arms folded behind her back, was slowly pacing the room."

a death-warrant than anything else, for Judge Lynch had thrown into its preparation the concentrated ingenuity acquired during many years of practice. In prominent characters on the sheet were enrolled the names of the accused with the charges against them.

The sight was too much even for the firm nerves of Mrs. Nathan. With a look of horror and despair she turned away, and threw herself into a chair. Miss Eleanore was less

powerfully affected, tears trickling down silently over features otherwise immovable. The moment seemed opportune for the final and decisive move in the game.

Gently taking the hand of the girl, the officer continued : "Miss Eleanore, if you will confide in me implicitly, I can save both you and your mother. Heaven knows I do not wish to be instrumental in sending ladies to prison. From the bottom of my heart, I desire to see such a calamity to you, to her, to your innocent sisters, averted. Restore the money, and no harm shall come near this household."

"Do you really mean it?" inquired she, imploringly.

"I do," he answered. "My word is pledged, and my word is sacred."

A sudden but resistless impulse seemed to seize the young woman. Without casting a glance toward the mother, or pausing to deliberate, she went to a home-made lounge or settee standing in one corner of the room, and lifting the moss-stuffed cushion, drew forth a package of bills, which she placed in the hand of the special agent, saying, "This is all I have left, and nearly all that I have ever taken from the mails. I alone am responsible. Mother had nothing to do with it. I know I acted very wrong, but I did it to obtain money to pay lawyers for defending brother Ned. Now, Colonel Schaurte, you will keep your promise not to arrest us, won't you?"

"Miss Eleanore," replied the officer, taking the roll of bills, "my word shall be sacredly kept to the letter. Give yourself no uneasiness. You are a woman. You have confessed and made restitution under pledge of safety. If I err in letting you off so lightly, that mistake shall be my only one."

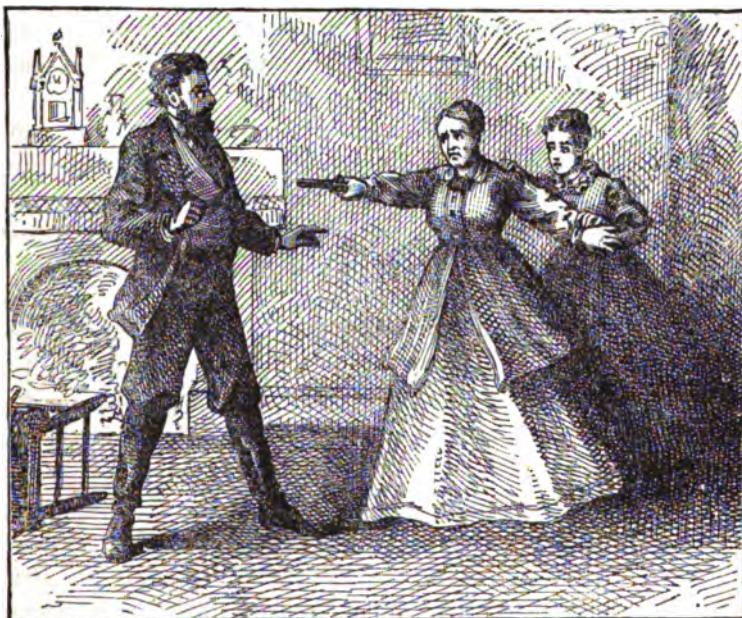
"May God bless you for your goodness!" exclaimed the poor girl, as the heavy load of apprehension rolled from her shoulders. "I shall always remember with gratitude your kindness."

While this important scene was taking place, Mrs. Nathan sat speechless and immovable, but her apparent apathy was

like the treacherous calm that sometimes precedes and heralds the tropical cyclone. Without a word, she rose and left the room. It was now about twelve o'clock, —

“The very witching time of night
When churchyards yawn, and Hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world.”

In a few minutes she returned, pale but determined. Her small black eye seemed to emit venom like the eye of an



“Her small black eye seemed to emit venom like the eye of an enraged rattlesnake.”

enraged rattlesnake. Her lips were tightly compressed, with flecks of froth exuding from the corners. In her hand she grasped a pistol. Striding toward the officer and raising the weapon, she hissed through her clenched teeth, “You have betrayed us, base wretch, and shall never leave this house alive !”

"Then," replied he, springing to his feet, "we will die together."

In his pocket the officer had two trusty derringers, but as he was about to draw one, he could not forget that his antagonist, though a devil, was still a woman.

Quick as thought, Miss Eleanore threw herself in front of the infuriated hag, and in tremulous tones seemed able only to articulate the words, "Mother, O mother!" Frenzied to the point of madness, however, the unnatural parent, with the strength of a giant, thrust aside her child. The officer strove to look cool and collected, and, if measurably successful, could not but admit that the muscles of the face did more than justice to the feelings of the heart.

At this perilous crisis, three low, distinct, solemn raps were heard at the door. Who stood outside in the pelting storm, friend or foe? Each one in the room listened in dread. It flashed across the mind of the special agent that Ned had returned home for a stealthy visit, his hands reeking with gore, and ready for further bloodshed to avenge the real or fancied wrongs of the family. Much more palpable was the alarm of Mrs. Nathan, for the pistol dropped from her terror-stricken hand. With her foot the daughter pushed the weapon aside, and it was seen by the visitor no more.

It required a repetition of the raps to break the spell. Summoning all his courage, the officer stepped to the door, feeling that between two fires very likely his last hour had come. Opening it slightly, he peered into the gloom, but at first could see nothing, so blinding was the wind and rain. Then in the dim light from the aperture a muffled figure was obscurely outlined. "Thank God that you still live!" whispered the dreaded visitant. "I was sure you were murdered. Come away, or she will kill you. You don't know that woman."

It was the familiar voice of Tom Brent, the postmaster.

Alarmed at the failure of the officer to return, the faithful friend had come to render aid, if aid could now be of avail. The reaction from fear transported the special agent to the highest altitude of courage and determination. Alone he felt

equal to the task of subduing a spirit that nothing hitherto had been able to break. With the confession of the postmaster secured, and a goodly portion of the stolen money in his possession, he might have left the accursed place, conscious that the difficult undertaking had been fully accomplished. But he was not satisfied to retreat under fire. The guns of the enemy must first be spiked.

In pursuance of this resolution, he said, in a low tone, "My dear Brent, go back to your office, and wait till I come. My work here must not be spoiled."



"Thank God that you still live!" whispered the dreaded visitant."

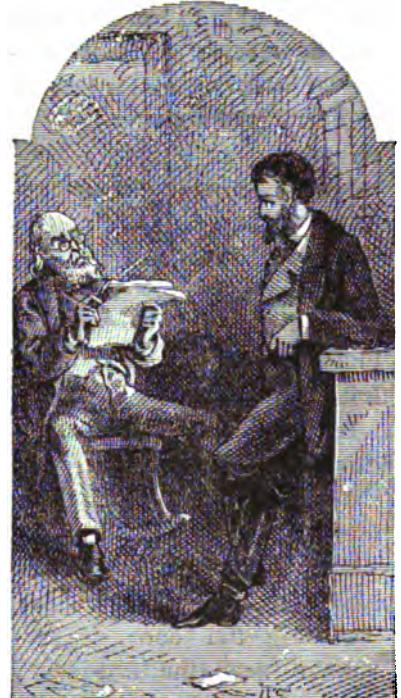
Closing the door, he returned to the side of the two women near the fire-place, whom he endeavored to soothe into tranquillity. "Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Nathan," he said; "I will not allow any one to hurt you, or suffer you to be arrested. The parties outside are only Masons, brother knights, who will attempt nothing except by my direction. Miss Eleanore has trusted to my word of honor, and shall never have occasion to regret it. This is the badge of our order," exhibiting a Maltese cross with skull and crossbones.

At this point Mrs. Nathan broke down completely, and

eyes long unused to tears began to weep. Either from contrition or policy, she strove to conciliate the man whom a few minutes before she had tried to shoot. "Colonel Schaurte," she said, "I owe you ten thousand apologies. Do forgive me. I did not know what I was about. I believe

now you are the best friend we have on earth." She then sought advice in regard to family affairs, and among the rest, in reference to the prospective marriage of Miss Eleanore. From the freedom of the conference one would have inferred that the little group were life-long friends.

About two o'clock he bade adieu to the penitent and grateful women, hastening as fast as the storm and mud would permit to the post-office, where the faithful friend, Tom Brent, was still waiting in a state of tremulous apprehension. The package of bills was unrolled, and was found to contain nearly one thousand dollars. By the numbers and other marks, many of them were identified



"The special agent listened with apparent interest to the doleful doggerel."

as the bills forwarded in the money-order remittance from Daleville to St. Louis the previous August, and rifled on the way.

Early the next morning he rode over to Daleville to acquaint Mr. Henry Smith, the postmaster, with the happy result of the investigation. The old gentleman, then about seventy-

five years of age, seemed to take very little interest in the matter, and, instead of complimenting the officer on his exploit, drew forth an original manuscript poem of a hundred pages or less, which he proceeded, in a low, monotonous tone, to read aloud. More considerate than the rhymester, the special agent listened with apparent interest to the doleful doggerel, till the entrance of a daughter, who appreciated the weakness of her father, put an end to the affliction.

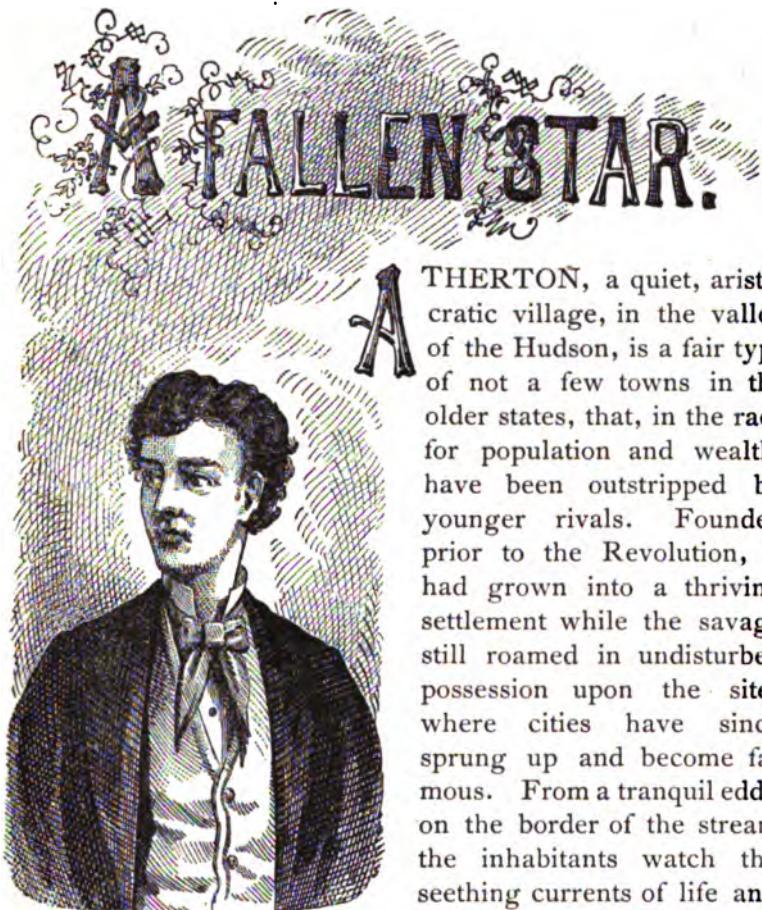


"With a sly twinkle of the eye, he congratulated the bridegroom upon his good fortune."

On his way home, the special agent remained at Dover over night to attend, by special invitation, the wedding of Miss Eleanore. The guests were few and select. With a sly twinkle of the eye, he congratulated the bridegroom upon his good fortune in securing so amiable a wife, and so high-

toned a mother-in-law. At midnight he left, standing high in the good graces of the family.

As the postmaster confessed, and restored the stolen property under pledge of protection, no further action was taken in the case.



Paul Atherton.

themselves in the distracting turmoil.

Except in the character of the people, there is no reason why Atherton should not have maintained the start won at the outset of the race. Advantages of location as well as priority of settlement gave promise of a prosperous career. During the critical period of growth, however, the leading citizens,

A THERTON, a quiet, aristocratic village, in the valley of the Hudson, is a fair type of not a few towns in the older states, that, in the race for population and wealth, have been outstripped by younger rivals. Founded prior to the Revolution, it had grown into a thriving settlement while the savage still roamed in undisturbed possession upon the sites where cities have since sprung up and become famous. From a tranquil eddy on the border of the stream the inhabitants watch the seething currents of life and traffic as they surge by, thankful that they are not

instead of inviting, repelled enterprise. When the pioneers were laying out one of the first railroads of the system that has since been so extended as to bring into one neighborhood the entire breadth of the continent, the Athertonians, regarding as a nuisance the whistle of the locomotive and the rumble of trains, gave the project no encouragement, thereby permitting a great iron artery to be located just near enough to absorb their life-blood, without imparting any nutriment in return. Similar indifference was shown to early attempts to introduce manufactures, from apprehension that the repose of the town would be disturbed, and the morals of the youth corrupted, by the operatives in the mills.

The principal street extended a mile and a half, and was lined on each side with substantial residences, built mostly of brick, trimmed with blue stone. The inclosures were capacious, and profusely shaded with choice trees and shrubbery. Yet on the main avenue hardly a new structure had gone up within a quarter of a century. A stranger could see at a glance that these homes were reared for permanence by wealthy owners, at a period when every man's house was his castle. Occasionally a dilapidated family, rooted to the soil, had been forced by stress of adversity to allow the yards and fences to go to waste; but in such cases the honest old dwellings lasted much better than the blood. In a number of the gardens there can still be seen the old-fashioned sun-dial, long antedating the era of the once ubiquitous clock-peddler.

Any description would be sadly imperfect that omitted reference to the churches. Solid, square, modest in appointments, and boasting neither tall spires nor stained windows, they stand to-day as they stood in the days of the patroons, resisting innovation, and offering, as they have long done, the only retreats where patrician and plebeian can meet on common ground, in the presence of a common God.

The germ of this unique development was outlined at the first meeting of the original settlers. It was then voted that

Abraham Atherton and his heirs forever should be a committee of the village, with a power equal to each of the four annually chosen by the people. In due time the Revolution, with its charter of equal rights, demolished all such privileges, but in this instance the spirit of the usage long survived its fall. Thus, for half a century previous to the incidents about to be narrated, the village had led a slumberous and monumental existence, an antique link in the chain connecting the present with the past.

As might be inferred from the exclusive habits of the people, intelligence and morality largely predominated; for vice, gregarious in its tendencies, makes slow headway where conservatism is the fashion. An unusually large proportion enjoyed incomes sufficiently abundant to raise the recipients above the necessities of toil and the perplexities of traffic. The schools were good, the churches well attended, and a branch of the Young Men's Christian Association furnished the principal exhibitions for the entertainment of the youth. No glittering or meretricious temptations were thrown in the way of the rising generation to lure them to evil. Such incidents of our progressive civilization as "defalcations" or "embezzlements" — modern terms invented to veneer the hideousness of what is called robbery or theft in the case of the low and the friendless — were unknown, and as far back as memory ran, not an arrest of an Athertonian had been made for an offense enumerated in the calendar of crimes.

In one respect Atherton was fully abreast of its most enterprising neighbors, and far in advance of the average village of similar size. Too often, at the period of which we write, post-offices were located in dirt-begrimed rookeries, whither the loafers of the place resorted to smoke, gossip, and tell stories, the doors being practically closed against ladies by the vileness of the surroundings. Not so here. Though sharing the prevalent air of repose, the office was provided with all the modern improvements for the convenient dispatch of business, and was a model of neatness and order. The

public were proud of the institution, and had an abiding faith in its good management.

Thus affairs had gone on for many years without a ripple of trouble or distrust to ruffle the placid surface. At rare intervals letters to distant points would be reported as lost or delayed; but the facts were uniformly explained, without calling in question the carefulness or honesty of the home-office. But maladies requiring treatment from the agents of the department sometimes break out where least expected. All at once, merchants and capitalists, whose life-long experience had caused them to place implicit trust in the security of the mails, began to suffer from the depredations of a thief. Remittances carefully deposited in the box at the post-office were never heard of afterwards, though in nearly every instance the letters reached the persons addressed in apparently good condition. Expected acknowledgments failed to come to hand, but in their place came reminders that the writers had forgotten the inclosures. Correspondence of no pecuniary value, or containing checks, uniformly reached their destination, but moneys were ruthlessly confiscated. In the opinion of the sufferers, the daring robber who had laid an embargo on their mails was credited with a sort of clairvoyant faculty for discerning bank-notes, even when buried beneath triple folds of paper; else why should inclosures of every other kind pass unmolested? The thefts that began in driblets increased in frequency, till the annoyance became intolerable. Different parties complained to the postmaster, and finding no relief, explained their grievances to the department at Washington. Some hinted confidentially where the trouble would probably be found, but in no instance did suspicion, like an oft-praised form of charity, begin at home. The various papers were duly referred to special agent B. K. Sharretts, of New York city, who was deputed to visit the locality, look over the ground, and draw his own conclusions.

Within a few years, besides building a street railway to Ilium, several of the capitalists of Atherton had so far yielded

to the spirit of progress as to invest a portion of their wealth in the establishment of local manufactories. The complaints made to Washington emanated principally from two of these concerns, each of which had frequent occasion to send money by mail. Rifled letters went through apparently intact, but contained no trace of the remittances referred to in the text. At first the discrepancies were attributed to carelessness, charges and countercharges passing between correspondents with a freedom that, in some instances, reached the verge of acerbity. As the trouble continued to grow, however, after the parties most deeply interested had been put upon their guard, the losers settled down into the conviction that some outside barbarian, posted along the approaches to Atherton, was perpetrating these deeds of direful note.

A striking peculiarity of the depredations early struck the attention of the agent. Aside from the two manufacturers referred to, very few of the residents had met with any trouble, and these belonged to the class who keep matters to themselves, and are constitutionally averse to making mention of their wrongs. Notwithstanding the embargo, the public generally could still remit money with perfect security, their letters never being disturbed.

In running down mail thieves, a skillful agent proceeds successively to locate the office where the robberies occur, to "spot" the offender, and, after the accomplishment of these preliminaries, to so conduct the subsequent investigation as to secure undoubted legal evidence of the guilt of the criminal. The first step in the series required no study. Mails to and from Atherton, at that time, all passed through the neighboring city of Ilium. From the latter place the rifled letters diverged to every point of the compass, so that only two offices handled any considerable part of them, and in one of the two the thief must accordingly be sought. But Ilium also distributed the mails for a wide extent of country, and throughout the entire circuit no community, except Atherton, experienced any losses. The inference, then, was irresistible

that the author of the trouble must be looked for there. If located at Ilium, with a hundred offices to operate on, he would be a most extraordinary thief to confine his attentions to one.

At this stage of the investigation the case, from its apparent simplicity, promised to yield readily to the common remedies. Making Ilium a *point d'appui*, the officer visited Atherton *incognito*, carefully surveying the office and its environs, and



"The officer mailed a number of letters that to an ordinary thief would have proved as irresistibly attractive as fat chickens to a hungry hawk."

mailing a number of letters that to the ordinary thief would have proved as irresistibly attractive as fat chickens to a hungry hawk. He returned to Ilium in time to intercept the pouch from Atherton only to find the decoys all present and intact. For a number of successive days the experiment was repeated with similar results. At this slow rate of progress the inquiry speedily grew monotonous and wearisome. Where the agent expected to catch a gudgeon at the first drop of the

line, he found instead a crafty old fish that obstinately refused to bite. Might it not be that an outsider, having no legitimate business within the counter, perpetrated the thefts? Employés, often careless and confiding, are liable to be imposed upon, to the great injury of the public, by cunning rascals, who cultivate their acquaintance for the express purpose of gaining opportunities to steal. These are more difficult to detect, because their operations are more irregular and capricious. Other questions, that could not be answered satisfactorily without an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the office, required solution as a preliminary to final success.

Meanwhile, as the agent was operating *incognito*, the danger of exposure daily increased. Should it leak out that a strange United States official was lurking in the vicinity without making himself known, the thief, ever on the alert to scent the approach of danger, would at once take the alarm, and, declining all further opportunities to steal, would, as a matter of policy, become for the nonce scrupulously exact. He accordingly determined to adopt a bold line of action, and one which requires for successful development rare self-possession, tact, and readiness of invention. This was no less than to proceed openly to the office, in true official character. One morning, therefore, he dropped in upon the postmaster in the most informal manner, and having exhibited his credentials, remarked, in tones loud enough to be heard by the employés, that he was on a visit to the locality for the purpose of ascertaining the status of a mail contractor residing in the neighborhood, who, at the late lettings, had been the successful bidder on several stage routes in adjacent states. The department was naturally anxious to learn whether he could give the requisite bonds, and otherwise fulfill his engagements. Not a word was uttered by either one in regard to local troubles, or a whisper breathed in reference to missing letters.

The postmaster, a fine old gentleman, evidently well along

in the sixties, wore an expression of guileless honesty that lifted him far above the range of distrust. It was apparent from his face and bearing that he was not a person either to do wrong himself or to suspect evil in others. Thus a glance served to eliminate from the investigation the chief of the establishment. Close watching and adroit inquiries soon satisfied the agent that no outsider did the stealing. The thief, whoever he might be, lived, moved, and had his being within the limits of the inclosure. How he was to be discovered was the one question now to be considered.

There were but two clerks in the office: a young gentleman of great reputed ability and elevation of character, Mr. Paul Atherton, and a boy called "Scrappy," whose name, however, was entered on the baptismal register as Sandy Scrapps. Paul was a lineal descendant of Abraham, the colonial magistrate who founded the village; and to him, by right of seniority, and as the heir of a locally illustrious name, the agent first directed his attention. About twenty-four years of age, tall and erect, with raven hair and piercing black eyes, young Atherton presented a striking, and to the casual observer a prepossessing exterior. A white necktie, superadded to immaculate linen and clothes of irreproachable cut, strongly suggested the divinity student as the character which he inclined to affect. Enjoying a spotless reputation, he was foremost in conspicuous charities, and especially in the various enterprises undertaken for the regeneration of a "lost and ruined world." As a deacon in a leading church, secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, and director of a semi-weekly prayer-meeting, he won golden opinions from the religious element, which regarded him as a paragon of piety. Recalling the maxim, "Whom the gods love die young," as illustrated in Sunday-school books by the early translation of good little saints, and observing, too, a wan, weary look on the face of the favorite, caused, doubtless, by midnight vigils at the foot of the throne, the spinsters of the congregation expressed to each other vague apprehensions

that Paul, too pure and spiritual for earth, would not be permitted to tarry long among them.

Such was the character borne by the assistant postmaster in the community, and as such was he known to the agent on the morning of the first call at the office. After subjecting him to close but guarded scrutiny, however, the observer became impressed that the popular estimate was strangely false. The rhyme of Tom Brown came to mind as somehow pertinent to the case.

"I do not love thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this alone I know full well,
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell."

The countenance of Paul lacked the transparency and openness of ingenuous youth. A broad scar on the right cheek had a queer trick of turning deep crimson under the flush of excitement, while the rest of the face remained unchanged. His eye wandered uneasily as if accustomed to watch for pitfalls, and occasionally shot forth a gleam of apprehension and unrest, that, combined with the fitful blaze of the scar, recalled Dante's legend of the chained devil, waiting for his fetters to break, that he might lead to ruin everything, whether damned or sacred, that fell in his way.

Scrappy, the other clerk, produced a very different impression on the mind of the observer. A round, plump form gave abundant proof of an easy conscience and good digestion, while a broad, mirthful, good-natured face, illumined by a clear, steady eye, afforded the strongest kind of internal evidence that his feet had never learned to stray from the path of rectitude.

Having ruled out of the investigation both the postmaster and Scrappy as unquestionably honest, the agent determined to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with Mr. Paul Atherton, and to become familiar with his habits and peculiarities.

In part pursuance of the plan he called at the office every

morning, and soon succeeded in impressing the postmaster and the clerks with the belief that he was a harmless bore. They might wonder occasionally what kept him so long in the locality, but, supposing that the special service offered an asylum for the support of more or less decayed politicians, naturally inferred that he belonged to the supernumeraries who went about on light jobs for the department, as a cover for more familiar and congenial work. Paul frequently joined in the conversation with a subdued though manifest air of



"But the gentleman declined to lend the slightest assistance."

condescension and patronage. Clearly he anticipated no danger from this quarter. On his part the agent was particularly careful to say or do nothing to excite apprehension.

Meanwhile test letters continued to pass through the office undisturbed, though the losses of the original sufferers showed no signs of abatement. It is the business of a detective, by studying the work of a thief, to learn his methods,—to penetrate as it were into his inner consciousness, with a view of

discovering the theories on which he acts. In the present troubles it had now become tolerably clear that the depredator confined his operations to a few prominent establishments. The agent accordingly solicited, in confidence, the co-operation of the chief of one of the principal houses, which the robber had honored with his attentions; but the gentleman peremptorily declined to lend the slightest assistance, resenting the implied imputation upon the fair fame of the Atherton office, and suggesting courteously, though with sufficient plainness to be intelligible, that this was no place for "putting up a job" on the innocent. Nothing remained but to fight the battle alone, with a still unshaken faith that in some way Justice would aid her servant to the accomplishment of her ends.

Several mornings the detective observed on the features of Paul a wan, sleepy, dissipated look, such as a bacchanalian wears after a night-long debauch. The appearance differed entirely from the symptoms of disease. As there is no effect without a cause, he proceeded to investigate the origin of the phenomenon.

Returning from Ilium after dark, to shadow the movements of the clerk, the detective found that he boarded at the house of an uncle, and went to bed with remarkable punctuality at precisely nine o'clock. If out for the evening, he returned home shortly before the appointed hour, and as the church-clock struck nine, a light appeared in one of the front chambers, and was uniformly extinguished after the lapse of a few minutes, when darkness reigned throughout the house. Night after night the agent took a stand under a convenient tree diagonally opposite, and night after night the same routine was repeated. Perplexed but not discouraged, he resolved to persevere. The puzzle of the jaded and haggard countenance acquired a positive fascination, haunting his thoughts, and even intruding on his dreams. As the mystery deepened, an important discovery rewarded the fidelity of the officer.

On a cold, drizzly, disagreeable night, having finished the customary vigil and witnessed the extinguishment of the light

in the chamber of the clerk, supposing that the curtain had dropped finally on the operations of the day, the agent emerged from the "coigne of vantage" beside the tree-trunk. Wet and chilled, he decided to warm by the fire of an acquaintance instead of returning directly to Ilium as usual. The friend was in excellent humor, and the coals glowing in the open grate never looked more cheery. Between choice Havanas and pleasant conversation the hours slipped by unnoticed. Very late he rose to go, and taking a street-car, was soon lost in somnolent reverie. About midway on the road, the car was



"The broad collar of an overcoat concealed his cheeks, while his forehead and eyes were buried under the ample brim of a slouched hat."

detained eight or ten minutes by some obstruction. Meanwhile an up car came to a halt exactly opposite, so that the windows of the two were nearly *vis-a-vis*.

Aroused by the incident, the officer mechanically glanced at the interior of the vehicle, and noticed that there were three passengers, two ladies and a gentleman, the latter seemingly

in delicate health, for he was carefully muffled to the chin. As nothing in the appearance of either invited further attention, he was about to resume his nap, when the gentleman rose up and walked to the door. His gait and manner awakened into full activity the faculties of the detective. Where and when had he seen the man before? The form and step of the stranger suggested something familiar and disagreeable, but for a moment the train of mental associations refused to connect the person with the name. Meanwhile the muffled figure walked out upon the platform, and straining forward to discover the cause of the delay, came under the full glare of an adjacent lamp. The light fell on a pale complexion, relieved on the right cheek by a spot of bright crimson. There could be no mistake: it was Paul Atherton, cunningly disguised, but at length discovered in a new rôle, the character and scope of which were soon to be developed.

When the up car started, it had received an accession to the list of passengers in the shape of an old gentleman, rather round of form, but apparently feeble in health. The broad collar of an overcoat concealed his cheeks, while his forehead and eyes were buried under the ample brim of a slouched hat. An occasional wheeze, alternating with a cough, fully justified the precautions taken by the invalid for the protection of throat and lungs against the raw night air. The occupants, however, took little notice of the asthmatic or of each other. Paul was too much self-absorbed either to pity the infirmities or to consciously observe the presence of a poor stranger. By the next morning very likely, the episode had passed wholly from his mind.

When the car reached the home of Mr. Atherton, that worthy alighted, and a short distance beyond, the old gentleman of the pulmonic affection did the same. It would have astonished his traveling companions to see what a curative effect the open air, and particularly the darkness exerted over the malady. Returning to the customary outlook, he saw Paul, in the dim light from a distant street-lamp, stealthily

advance up the walk, and pull off his boots on the stoop. The door was then cautiously opened by means of a night-key, and the figure disappeared.

The agent returned to Ilium with a light heart, and slept soundly. After many days of patient effort, he at length grasped a clue, which confirmed his suspicions in reference to the real author of the robberies, and which would probably soon lead to more material discoveries.



"The door was then cautiously opened, and the figure disappeared."

The next morning he called, as had become his habit, at the Atherton post-office, and again noticed the haggard look of the gentlemanly assistant; but the hieroglyphics stamped upon the face of the debauchee were no longer unintelligible. More clearly than ever before the keen eye of the detective saw what havoc dissipation was making with the health of the youth. Already his temples were furrowed

by lines indicative of premature decay. After exchanging the compliments of the day, the clerk inquired, in a slightly supercilious tone, "By the way, Mr. S—, how are you getting on with that mail-contractor? Don't you fellows from Washington drive rather slow coaches?"

"A great deal better than at first," answered the agent. "I enjoy the country about here hugely, and what is the use of hurrying? Believe I have gotten about to the bottom of the

thing, though, and shall have to leave soon. The best of friends must part, you know."

"We shall be sorry to spare you," said Paul, with a slight smack of irony.

That evening the detective left Ilium much later than usual, not caring to witness a repetition of the preliminary farce. It was past nine o'clock, and the light was extinguished in the front chamber when he reached the house of the deacon. He



"By the way, Mr. S—, how are you getting on with that mail contractor? Don't you fellows from Washington drive rather slow coaches?"

was compelled to wait so long, however, before discovering signs of animation, that he was about to depart, under the impression that the nocturnal expeditions of the inmate took place irregularly, and that this was one of the nights devoted to rest. While deliberating on the propriety of bringing the vigil to a close, the sash of the chamber-window was cautiously raised. At first the head, and then half the body of the occupant protruded through the aperture. He seemed to peer forth into

the darkness, looking up and down the street. Except the sough of the trees, all was silent and deserted. What will he do?

"Through the green forest arch
The wild winds in their march
Sigh and complain;
The torrent on the hill
Moans to the midnight chill,
In vain, in vain!"



"The youth lowered something by a string, closed the sash, and shortly after emerged from the front door."

The youth lowered something by a string, closed the sash, and shortly after emerged from the front door. Stepping to one side, he picked up the package, which proved to be a

pair of boots, and drew them on. He then hurried to the car. Meantime the detective, disguised so completely that his most intimate friend could have no suspicion of his identity, secured a place on the platform with the driver. On reaching Ilium, Paul alighted at a cross street running into a neighborhood that had a weak reputation for morality, and after walking



"The asthmatic old gentleman of the previous night, now transformed into a somewhat dilapidated inebriate, followed closely."

two or three blocks, turned into a saloon. A few yards behind, unseen and unsuspected, followed the agent of the department.

The ante-room of the establishment, fitted up with mirrors and an elaborate display of cut glass, was used as a bar.

Paul, barely nodding to the proprietor, passed on into the brilliantly lighted apartment beyond, one of the bucks greeting him with the salutation, "How goes it, dominie?" Returning a reply in kind, the new-comer took off his coat, and was soon engaged in the mysteries of french carom.

The asthmatic old gentleman of the previous night, now transformed into a somewhat dilapidated inebriate, followed so closely as to hear the salutations extended to the assistant



"The new arrival staggered into the billiard-parlor, and tumbled into a seat in close proximity to the table upon which Paul was playing."

postmaster. Passing through the bar-room unchallenged, though conscious that an evil eye, turned sharply upon his seedy habiliments, was taking a hasty and by no means complimentary inventory of his visible assets, with the view of divining the probable value of his purse, the new arrival staggered into the billiard-parlor, and tumbled into a seat in close proximity to the table upon which Paul was playing. A drunkard so far advanced on the road to ruin, was a novel

sight in those gayly decorated apartments. Many started here on the downward career, but, with the loss of youth, and money and decorous dress, they descended to lower resorts to make room for fresh recruits destined in turn to run the same round.

The proprietor entered with the evident intention of ejecting the seedy stranger as a loafer who had lost his bearings. At this juncture the supposed inebriate dexterously displayed a roll of greenbacks, with the figures on a bill of large denomination purposely arranged to catch the eye. The mollifying effects of the vision were instantly apparent. The acerbity on the countenance of Cerberus dissolved in a gracious smile, and, with a courteous nod, he passed on.

Unnoticed by the gay company, the tatterdemalion found in Mr. Paul Atherton a subject for absorbing study. Compelled as he often was by the exigencies of business to track criminals through the dens of iniquity, he was now shocked on listening to the profanity, mingled with obscene jests, that streamed from the lips of the imagined exemplar of virtue. Not content with ordinary oaths, the youth soared upward to the most audacious heights of blasphemy.

“Swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted, base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder.”

On the circle where the moral status of individuals is registered, an arc of infinite length seems to separate the leader of the prayer-meeting from the habitué of the gambling-den, but Atherton cleared the distance at a leap. Yet in neither place was he at home. His manner was constrained, and his oaths unnatural. In which situation did the neophyte in debauchery act the more hideous part, when with uplifted hands he invoked the Creator in the presence of the congregation, or when he plunged into riotous revelry? King Richard answers the question, —

"And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With old odd ends, stol'n out of Holy Writ,
And seem a saint when most I play the devil."

Happily, hypocrisy does not often take such odious shape.

It would not be agreeable to the writer, or profitable to the reader, to go more fully into the particulars of the midnight orgy, except to mention a circumstance which has a most important bearing upon the fate of the leading character. After playing a few games of billiards and taking several glasses at the expense of his companions, Paul called for "drinks for the crowd," and tendered in payment a five-dollar bill. Not to be outdone in generosity, the ragamuffin ordered a "bot'l best wine," handing the bar-tender a twenty-dollar greenback. The concocter of poisons examined carefully the beautiful specimen of engraving, as if silently questioning the genuineness of the article. The scrutiny, however, appeared to be satisfactory, for he returned fifteen dollars in change, including the identical bill just paid to him by Atherton. What was the astonishment, not to say delight, of the detective to recognize the familiar outlines of a note which he had placed in a decoy two days before, and which had already been the silent instrument for trapping more than one mail-robber! It was difficult to repress his excitement. He fondled the treasure as a mother would a lost child, and, when fully satisfied that there could be no mistake, deposited the precious scrap of evidence in a safe pocket.

Till that moment, though the letter was in his coat, the detective did not know it had been rifled. This singular instance of neglect to watch closely the ventures sent forth to test the honesty of the assistant postmaster can be easily explained. Having failed with every decoy, he was about ready to abandon the system in disgust for some new method, when he met Paul on the street-car. The next morning, as the confidential clerk at Ilium handed him the last lot which had been duly intercepted, and which on close examination of the exterior bore no mark of treacherous handling, the agent, pre-

occupied with the discovery of the previous night, slipped the package into a side-pocket unopened. The discovery was the more startling because entirely unexpected.

During the rest of the evening the detective watched the various proceedings with the satisfaction of a hunter who, after a long and troublesome chase, holds the game so completely in his power that he can bring it to the ground at any moment.



"Not to be outdone, the ragamuffin ordered a 'bot'l best wine.'

It was long past midnight when the company broke up. Finally, adieux were exchanged, and the revelers prepared to disperse. As Paul pushed by the toper, he gave as parting salute, "Come, old shoojer, mizzle;" and the party addressed, wonderfully clear-headed and sober, considering his unpromising aspect, "mizzled."

On repairing to the post-office the next morning, the detective found Paul alone. Instead of replying to the customary greeting of the clerk, he entered the room without the slightest sign of

recognition, and, taking a seat near by, fastened upon him his searching, black eye. Without a word he maintained the steady and terrific glare for several minutes in conformity with a plan of action predetermined with the view of paving the way for the final catastrophe, as surgeons by a course of preliminary medication prepare the systems of patients to meet the shock of capital operations.

The quick, alternating flashes of scarlet and white in the scar upon the cheek, showed that the guilty heart was throbbing with unwonted violence. Chilled to the marrow by that freezing stare, the clerk could bear the torture no longer. With half averted face, he advanced a step or two, and tremblingly inquired, "What, in the name of God, is the matter?"

Adding, if possible, a still deeper intensity to the earnestness of his look, and, raising his hand solemnly, the officer replied, "You are a bad man, Paul Atherton, and you know that I know it."

"A bad man!" rejoined the clerk. "You talk in riddles; I do not comprehend you; I cannot tell what you mean."

"You are a deceiver—a thief! You are leading a double life. I have tracked you through all your crooked paths and wicked courses. I have followed you into the bar-room and into the gambling-hell. I have listened in astonishment and horror to your oaths and obscenity. What is more, I have in my pocket at this moment money stolen by you from the mails. Your brazen hypocrisy is the most damning sin of all."

The clerk attempted to bristle with righteous indignation, but failed lamentably. Still, with a faint assumption of self-assurance, he answered, "It is false! You are cruelly slandering a Christian gentleman."

Not wishing to extemporize a scene in so public a place, the agent invited Paul to step across the way to a private room in the hotel, leaving the postmaster, who had just entered, in charge of the office. The walk in the fresh air seemed to revive temporarily the courage of the accused, for, on reach-

ing the apartment, he broke out, loudly and defiantly, "Whoever says I am a thief tells an infernal lie!"

"I say you are a thief!" replied the officer, in a voice of thunder. "I repeat it, and am prepared to substantiate the charge."

Instantly changing his whole demeanor, the clerk imploringly said, "Please do not speak so loudly."

"Suit yourself," answered the imperturbable man, who held



"I say you are a thief!" replied the officer, in a voice of thunder."

the writhing victim in a gripe of steel. "I am equally ready to talk in thunder tones or in whispers." He saw already that the outworks of the enemy were carried, and that a few more vigorous blows would demolish the innermost defences.

The two took seats, when the detective, carefully watching the effect, threw out such hints as he thought advisable to show the misguided youth the extensive and thorough knowledge he possessed of the habits and practices of this particular specimen of the "Christian gentleman." Definitely as the

facts were pressed home, the clerk continued to protest his innocence, though with gradually weakening emphasis.

"Well, then," said the officer, "if you are determined to persist in your chosen policy of falsehood and hypocrisy, you must go with me to Ilium to answer before a United States commissioner. You will then pass out of my hands into the custody of the marshal, and will have no further opportunity to ease your conscience or improve your sad condition by communicating the truth to me. I shall wash my hands of you except as witness and prosecutor."

"I have nothing to confess," replied the dissembler; "my heart is pure, my record clean."

"Come, then," said the agent; "it is needless to waste further time here."

They entered a street-car, and in a few minutes were on the way to Ilium.

We must now go back a little in our narrative. A short time before, a registered letter from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, containing fifty-five dollars, and addressed to a wealthy lady of Atherton, failed to reach her. The return letter-receipt was sent back to the remitter, bearing the forged signature of the person to whom it should have been delivered. Not receiving the money at the appointed time, she wrote to her correspondent, and learned by return mail of the loss and the forgery. She sent the papers to the department, and requested to have the matter investigated, little dreaming how near home the blow would fall. The case was promptly forwarded to Mr. Sharretts, and had now been in his hands a couple of days. During the interval he had studied the forged signature with the closest attention, and, although the writing was cleverly disguised, he recognized the characteristic chirography of Paul Atherton.

When half-way to Ilium, after various conversations with the prisoner, the detective, for the first time in the excitement attendant on the arrest, recalling to mind the possession of the forged receipt, drew it deliberately from his pocket, and

continued, "You have denied stealing letters from the mail. Do you dare, sir, to deny signing that paper?" At the same time he spread it out ominously before him.

The self-convicted wretch writhed and wilted as if the dread vision had suddenly converted his vertebral column from bone to jelly. Partially recovering from the shock, he remarked with the softness of childhood, "Let us get out."

On the bare roadside the signal-bell was rung, and the



"I am guilty, O God, how guilty; let me die here!"

two alighted. As the car passed from sight around the next curve, the assistant postmaster dropped on his knees. With clasped hands and upturned eyes he ejaculated, as if from a broken heart, "I am guilty, O God, how guilty; let me die here!"

The agony of the conscience-stricken youth was terrible to witness. Tears from fountains long parched chased each other down his cheeks, while the scar flashed and flickered

like the coruscations of northern lights. At length the special agent raised the crushed and helpless form from the ground. Having, after a long struggle, won the victory, at the moment alike of sadness and of triumph, he gave way himself to the weakness of our common humanity. Professionally, the officer could hardly fail to experience satisfaction at bringing the obstinately contested investigation to a successful close, yet at the same time he was deeply touched at the ruin which shattered like a thunderbolt the happiness and the hopes of a life that opened with fairest promise under brightest skies.

From that moment the manner of Paul Atherton was entirely changed. The mask of hypocrisy and falsehood dropped off, never, we may trust, to be resumed. Sorrow for the crimes committed weighed upon the contrite heart far more heavily than the disgrace of exposure. Evasions and concealments were at an end. The light and the voice from heaven hardly wrought a greater change in the aims of Saul of Tarsus, than the inward revelations of that hour effected in the conduct of Paul Atherton. Thenceforward he told the simple truth, declining to palliate in the least the enormity of his offenses, or to profit by the willing prevarications of others.

The next car took them home, and they returned in full concord to the private room in the hotel, which they had lately left amid vehement criminations and no less vehement denials. No sooner were they seated, than the penitent thief proceeded to detail minutely the causes and circumstances of his fall. Painful as the story was, he found obvious relief in the recital. The tale, in brief, ran thus: —

"I commenced stealing about two years ago. What you saw the other night at Ilium will suggest the character of the temptations that first led me astray. In an evil hour I fell in with bad company, and almost before suspecting the danger, was, by my own weakness and folly, hurled down the abyss. The strange scenes to which I was now intro-

duced fascinated while they appalled me. In moments of calm reflection I was horrified at my wickedness, and many times I have wondered at the forbearance of God in not striking me dead for my sins. Among my neighbors, as you know, I kept up a hollow show of piety, but the mockery seemed like the grinning skeleton of my former self, and sometimes almost drove me mad.

"Bad company brought expensive habits. The demands on my purse were incessant and pressing. With the exhaustion of resources came the temptation to rob. For some weeks I resisted; but at length, driven to desperation by the pressure for money, with trembling hands and throbbing pulse I broke the seal of a letter that did not belong to me! It was a

moment of terror. Even the pictures on the wall appeared to frown upon me with indignant scorn. When I sallied forth to find relief from the stings of conscience in the bustle of the street, I seemed to read my sentence in the looks of every person that I met. Trees pointed at me. Clouds scowled upon me. Man and nature joined in pronouncing sentence of condemnation, none the less dreadful because rendered in silence. I sought forgetfulness by plunging into wilder dissipations. Vain search! Increasing necessities drove me to frequent robberies. Sometimes I resolved to break away from evil company and to give up my wicked practices, but a power that I could not resist urged me on. Yet this show of pleasure has brought me nothing but pain. Tongue cannot tell the prolonged agony of the last two years. At this moment, with exposure, disgrace, and imprisonment before me, I feel easier than I have felt before



Paul opening letters.

since the commission of that first crime. The suspense is over, the crisis past. I know where I stand, even if shackles bind my feet."

Meantime, the penitent had risen from his seat, and, pacing up and down the room with arms folded behind his back, gave utterance to his impassioned feelings. The officer listened with earnest sympathy, well knowing that the frankness of the confession and the sincerity of the contrition offered the best assurance that a character even so sadly blackened as this might yet be redeemed. As the young man grew gradually calmer, the genuine *esprit de corps* resumed sway over the thoughts of the detective. There were singular features connected with the robberies which he wished to have explained, and no time seemed likely to be more favorable than the present for pressing the inquiry. He accordingly interpolated a remark with the view of turning the confession from generals to particulars. "Paul, I rejoice that you have spoken the truth. When a criminal does that in the right spirit, he is already half reclaimed. If you are willing to respond, I should like to ask a few questions."

"Go on. Ask me anything," replied the clerk; "to the best of my ability, I will answer truthfully."

"I have sent scores of decoys through the office here," resumed the detective, "and you never molested but one. I thought no confirmed thief could withstand the temptation. How and why did you avoid them?"

"That question is easily answered, sir. I confined my depredations exclusively to a few persons or firms, never deviating from the rule except in two or three instances. No matter what other parties might inclose, their letters passed through untouched. In the selection of victims I was governed by two considerations. I picked out those who remitted a good deal of money by mail, and who I knew would not be likely to make much fuss about losses."

"Why, then, did you open my letter addressed to Mr. Blank, at Pottsville, Pennsylvania?"

"The handwriting deceived me. I thought it was from Mr. Allen, and was the more easily led astray as I happened to know that his occasional correspondent, Mr. Blank, was at the time in Pottsville. After resealing and sending it forward, I had a presentiment of trouble from that letter — felt that I had made a mistake, and was relieved when the five-dollar note passed out of my possession."

"Then you never molested letters addressed in an unfamiliar hand?"

"No, never. You see I have lived here all my life, and have been in the post-office for many years. I know all the people, and am pretty well acquainted with their business and their habits. I thought I was safe beyond the possibility of detection."

"When and where did you find opportunity for doing this peculiar work?"

"I took the letters home with me at night, and opened them in my room. I became very skillful at it, seldom leaving the slightest trace of the job. After abstracting the money, I returned the rest of the inclosure, and carefully resealing the envelope, sent it forward the next morning. When, as sometimes happened, I mutilated an envelope in the process, I destroyed it."

"How about the forged return registered-letter receipt?"

"Well, that was one of the exceptional cases alluded to. When the letter came, I was in terrible straits for money, and, believing that Mrs. L. would make no serious complaint, in a moment of madness, I resolved to steal the contents. As the package was known to have reached our office, the forgery followed as a necessity."

"Paul, how much money do you suppose you have taken during the entire period covered by these depredations?"

"That is a hard question to answer. I have kept no account, but I must have taken hundreds of dollars, and now I am penniless. My vices have stripped me of everything, — home, reputation, friends, liberty. That I should survive the

wreck of all that makes life worth having ! When I first took money from letters, it seemed as though every one I met looked upon me with suspicion. Companionship with the good and pure was a positive torture, and to drown remorse was almost my only thought. Once in the whirlpool of dissipation, demands for money constantly increased. I could not stop. Fearful of detection, yet powerless to withdraw from my disreputable course, I plunged madly on, hoping against hope, taking only those precautions against discovery which at first occurred to me, until now I find myself a wretched criminal, with nothing to look forward to but prison-walls and life-long shame. O, my God, my God ! why am I brought to this ? ”

Feeling that the wretched youth had suffered enough for one day, the special agent, with the view of diverting his thoughts from the remorseful channel into which they had drifted, inquired about the midnight performance in the chamber-window. “ What was your object in lowering your boots by a string ? ”

“ O,” answered the clerk, with a feeble smile, “ I always did that, going through the hall in my stockings. Then, in case I happened to meet any one in the passage, I could say, ‘ I heard a noise at the door, and was going down to see what was the matter.’ ”

“ With a pair of boots in one’s hand, that explanation would hardly pass muster.”

In this vein the conversation continued till the officer learned the history of the robberies. The postmaster was then sent for, and made acquainted with the facts. He, in common with the rest of the community, was astonished beyond measure at the developments. Many would have questioned the statements of a detective, but Paul Atherton manfully refused to profit by the kind incredulity of the public. Although numerous friends tried to interpose in his behalf, not many days after, the trial took place. The scene in the court-room was one of peculiar solemnity. Relatives and

friends were there to encourage and uphold one in whom they had so implicitly trusted for many years. Willingly would the good Athertonians have made up the losses, could the fair name of their beloved town have been shielded from the taint. Even the good, conscientious lady, who lost the fifty-five dollars, wanted to testify that her memory was very



"Guilty, or not guilty?" — "Guilty, very guilty."

poor; that she might have received the money, and might have signed the receipt. To all such suggestions, however, the prisoner turned a deaf ear. When arraigned at the bar of justice, he declined to be defended, and, in answer to the question, "Guilty, or not guilty?" responded, humbly but

firmly, "Guilty, very guilty." Ah, that was a noble triumph for you, Paul Atherton, when, in the face of humiliation and imprisonment, you resolved to cling to the truth for the sake of the truth. Gyves do not cut so deeply as falsehood. All possibilities of future usefulness, honor, and character await even the convict who builds anew upon the bed-rock of truth.

Paul was sentenced to a term of ten years' imprisonment; but, after the lapse of about two years, was pardoned by the President for good behavior.

KINDLING FALSE FIRES.



"In suddenness and fury, the storm surpassed the tropical cyclone."

citizen of the territory, gave him the details of a case in which he took a deep personal interest, and which he was very anxious to have him investigate. On the evening of July 21st, a burglar entered the post-office at Fair Play, Col-

N the month of October, 1871, special agent John B. Furay, under instructions from the superintendent of the Money Order Bureau, visited a small office in an outlying settlement of Colorado, and, after a hard struggle, collected from an impecunious postmaster and his sureties about two thousand dollars of government funds, which had been improperly withheld for private use. Loaded with nearly all the money in the place, he took the stage across the mountains in a fearful snow-storm, reaching Denver on the 26th. That night, Judge H. P. Bennett, a prominent

orado, and took a registered package containing sixty-six ounces of gold dust and a quantity of currency, valued in all at twelve hundred and sixty dollars.

The papers relating to the case were in the hands of special agent Dramful, who had visited Fair Play on the business, as had also one or two professional detectives employed by the owners of the stolen property. All concluded that the crime must have been committed "by one of three men, but which one there was nothing to show." This inconsequential deduction proved extremely unsatisfactory to the sufferers. Both on personal grounds and as a matter of public policy, they desired to have the matter sifted to the bottom. If the perpetrator of so aggravated a crime was permitted to escape undetected and unpunished, great encouragement would be given to the repetition of similar outrages, and the use of the mails for the transmission of valuables, so vital to the prosperity of the frontier, must come to an end.

An official of the department from Washington, who happened to be in Denver, joined Judge Bennett in urging Mr. Furay to go to Fair Play to see if the cloud overhanging the facts of the burglary was really so thick that no ray of light could penetrate the gloom. Other hope of discovery had failed. Dramful did not possess the ability to work the case to a successful issue. Besides, he was then in New Mexico, "bucking" at Spanish monte, and taking an occasional drink at odd intervals between the half hours. What was still worse, in view of the present emergency, he had the papers with him, thus compelling Mr. Furay, if he undertook the task, to gather up the threads of evidence anew. Yet, notwithstanding the complication of difficulties, a sense of duty impelled him onward with such force that he did not feel at liberty to decline.

About twenty inches of snow then lay upon the ground, and a storm was prevailing. It was ninety-five miles over the mountains to Fair Play. For three weeks the agent had not heard a word from the mother of his children, and not

expecting to be so long absent, was running low in cash. Then, too, the chances were that Dramful and the detectives, besides making no original discoveries, had actually ruined the case. Judge Bennett, however, volunteered to remedy the least of the difficulties, loaning the officer fifty dollars, and, what proved much more valuable in the end, a heavy over-coat. The next morning at six that worthy gentleman bade him a hearty Godspeed as he set forth *incognito* on the doubtful expedition.

After traveling all day and all night, the hack drove into Fair Play about daybreak the next morning. Having slept a couple of hours and taken breakfast, the detective began to move cautiously about town, and soon learned the superficial facts connected with the burglary and the subsequent investigations, which were already well known throughout that region.

The stolen package was mailed at Oro City—a mining settlement about thirty miles west of Fair Play, on the opposite side of Mount Lincoln, the "divide" of the Arkansas and Platte rivers lying between. It reached Fair Play on the afternoon of July 21st, and was duly delivered at the post-office, then kept in the store of Mr. A. M. Jaynes, who, though merely a deputy, had entire charge of the business. Wells, Fargo & Co. occupied a room in the same building, Mr. William H. Beery being their agent. Some time before Mr. Jaynes had employed as clerk a young man named Perry, whose subsequent relations with the deputy continued to be intimate, though on his frequent visits he never presumed to handle the mails.

On the 21st the carrier rode up at the usual hour, and, as often happened during the active months for mining, brought among the registers one "gold package" addressed to the postmaster at Denver. It was dated Oro City, July 20th, and numbered "8." While Jaynes was distributing the contents of the pouch, Beery, as was his custom, walked around behind the cases, and inquired if there was anything for him.

A letter was handed to him, when he turned to withdraw. In passing a table which stood behind the deputy, who was very busy at the moment, and did not look around at the question, Beery remarked, interrogatively, "Hello! another gold package from Oro to-day?"

"Yes," replied Jaynes, without stopping, "and a big one, too."

Beery walked away to another part of the building, and nothing more was said.

Having at the proper time entered a description of the package on the transit-sheet, the deputy laid it with the others on a little shelf under the delivery wicket, as was his habit. Beery went out soon after, to make preparations for an entertainment to be given at his house that evening. Among the invited guests were Jaynes and Perry. At dusk, the deputy-postmaster, having donned holiday attire and locked the store, sauntered over to the shop of his friend Perry, whence they proceeded together to the house of the host. The company dropped in one by one, and were soon engrossed with the festivities of the occasion.

As supper was about to be announced, Beery suddenly remembered that the fruit had been forgotten. Explaining the situation to one or two of the party, he took a basket and hurried out, going by the post-office and two other stores, to a small stand on the outskirts, where the needful purchases were made. It appeared from the statement of the shopkeeper that he was in great haste, as "the company were waiting." The entire absence of the host barely exceeded ten minutes.

After an agreeable evening, the gathering broke up about half past ten o'clock. Being single, Jaynes slept at the store, and thither he now returned. As the carrier started early in the morning, he habitually made up the outgoing mail the evening before; and this customary duty he proceeded to perform by the light of a candle. Having assorted and tied up the ordinary letters, and made out bills from the transit-sheet

for the registered matter, he discovered, on comparing the packages with the record, that No. 8 from Oro City was gone. Looking around, he observed for the first time, as he claimed, that the window on the east side of the store was partially raised. For a few minutes he hunted for the package alone, and failing to find it, ran in evident alarm to the house of Beery to seek his advice and assistance.

Beery returned to the store with the deputy, and in a short time half the village were there, for the news spread like fire on a prairie. The facts so far as narrated came out at once, and earnest discussions were held that night in reference to the probable burglar. The next morning the excitement was at fever heat, the community being split into three factions, which believed respectively in the guilt of Jaynes, Beery, and Perry, with the preponderance of suspicion greatly against Jaynes, on the ground chiefly that he had much greater facilities than the others for the commission of the crime.

Word was sent to the postmaster at Oro City, who was also a local capitalist and the remitter of the principal part of the stolen gold. He came at once, arriving on Sunday, and, after examining the field, concluded that the deputy was the thief, and expressed his convictions with no little earnestness and emphasis.

Aggressive proceedings were begun by Jaynes, who swore out a search-warrant against Beery on Monday morning. In exploring his premises, the officer found in the stable a piece of cotton twine and a scrap of the New York Tribune, each having fragments of wax adhering to them, and both having obviously been torn from the stolen package. Thereupon the adherents of Beery contended that the discovery proved nothing, as Jaynes undoubtedly placed the wrappings there before procuring the warrant, for the purpose of misleading the public by implicating an innocent party.

Not to be outdone in zeal, Beery also swore out a similar warrant against Jaynes; and the sheriff, with a posse includ-

ing both Beery and Perry, proceeded to the post-office building to search the premises. Before beginning the work, Beery proposed that the party should severally examine the clothing of each other, to preclude the possibility of repeating the trick which he claimed had been tried against him. This was accordingly done. While several of the party explored the rooms above, Beery, Perry, and the sheriff searched the cellar, Beery, with coat off, going down first through a small trap-door in the middle of the floor. The place was dark and dingy, full of boxes and other trash. After the hunt had continued perhaps half an hour, the sheriff found in a barrel, partly filled with old iron, registered package envelope No. 8, somewhat crumpled, and lying loose on top of the other contents. The explorers returned to upper daylight to exhibit the trophy in triumph. A scene of excitement followed that can only be witnessed in a small mining town on the frontier.

Other business was dropped to discuss the robbery, and the prospect looked black for Jaynes, though a few still persisted in the belief that he was innocent, alleging, on general principles, that Beery was the real criminal. Some maintained that Perry was the man, and that he had the package on his person on descending into the cellar; but the previous search to which the three were subjected presented a grave obstacle to the acceptance of that theory. The more the subject was agitated the darker it became.

Another circumstance damaged the cause of Jaynes. The sash of the side window, through which the burglarious entry was obviously made, would only open to the extent of six and three-eighths inches. It was stoutly maintained that neither Beery nor Perry could crawl through so small an aperture, yet the dust was swept from the sill in a way to indicate that some one had struggled hard to effect a passage. On the other hand, why was it necessary for the deputy, who had a key to the office, to make so violent an effort to gain admission through the window, when a little manipulation of the dust

with a handkerchief would evidently have served his purpose equally well?

The facts above narrated, variously toned to suit the preferences or prejudices of different individuals, were known to every one. Neither Dramful nor the detectives made any addition whatever to the stock of information already in the hands of the public. At the time they were there, expectation was on tiptoe, and matters were ripe for a grand *denouement*.



"The sheriff found in a barrel, partly filled with old iron, registered package envelope No. 8."

Four months had since elapsed, and, from the standpoint of a detective, the case had passed beyond the stage of healthy development into a most unwholesome staleness.

Between eight o'clock, A. M., and noon of Saturday, October 28th, Mr. Furay had quietly imbibed all that the public, or any one except the actual criminal, knew about the burglary. Beery was out of town, on a visit to his "ranch,"

ten or twelve miles distant. Perry was also away hunting up cattle.

Before taking any decisive steps, the detective needed precise information respecting the contents of the package. "Gold dust" was altogether too indefinite a description to meet the necessities of the crisis, as there are different grades and qualities of the ore, and a mistake in referring to them might prove fatal to success. Since the original papers were far away in the hands of Dramful, the only feasible method of learning the details appeared to be by conferring with the remitters at Oro City. A trip across the mountain would also enable the agent to preserve his *incognito* till the return of two of the principal characters to be interviewed.

He accordingly went out a mile from the village, and hiring a horse, started over the "divide" across the base of Mount Lincoln for Oro City, following a bridle-path only intended for a summer trail, and telling no one his destination. Relying upon his long experience in the Rocky Mountains, he took the most direct, though the most obscure route. He encountered, however, an unexpected obstacle. Gradually the clouds, not threatening at first, grew thicker and blacker, till late in the afternoon it began to snow. The altitude of the trail is about eleven thousand five hundred feet, Mount Lincoln, one of the loftiest, if not the loftiest elevation on the continent, towering several thousand feet above. It is several hundred feet higher than Fremont's Peak, and, like Fremont's Peak, rests upon a very high table-land, the surface of which is badly broken by ravines and gulches running down the mountain sides, and hence directly across the path of the traveler.

In suddenness and fury the storm surpassed the tropical cyclone. The wind rose to a hurricane, while the whole atmosphere, above, beneath, around, everywhere, seemed to be loaded with snow. Within half an hour from the fall of the first flake, though not yet sundown, absolute darkness

fell upon the mountains, so impenetrable even to light was the overhanging curtain. The wind blew in no particular direction, but at the same moment seemed to come from all quarters, the solitary human being battling there with the elements appearing to stand always at the focal point of the conflict.

With the extinguishment of light, he instantly lost the points of compass. When suddenly overtaken by appalling dangers, for which the mind has had no time to prepare, the lost traveler yields to an uncontrollable impulse to drift about; and so did our friend, although well aware that no course could be more perilous, as the trail wound along the edges of terrific chasms and precipices, down which he was liable to plunge at any instant. Within a radius of miles there was hardly a square rod of level ground.

For the first hour the aimless wanderer did not wholly despair that "the cloud would pass off the mountains," and leave daylight enough for the selection of a camping-place. The thermometer was already below zero, and during the night would fall much lower. With the exception of the heavy overcoat loaned by Judge Bennett of Denver, he was thinly clad in a light fall suit. Besides, he was in the worst possible physical condition for meeting such a trial, having for a week or more traveled almost continuously night and day, a part of the time over mountain roads in rough vehicles, catching hasty naps of sleep at odd intervals as opportunities arose. He had eaten a light dinner in great haste, but no supper, and the prospects for finding one that night were momentarily growing less.

The storm, however, did not break away, but if possible increased in violence. A gust of unusual fierceness tore off his hat, and the darkness deepened till it became almost palpable. The rarefied air tended still further to depress the vital forces. So suddenly and overwhelming did dangers close around the bewildered man, that for a brief but terrible interval he lost courage, and was almost ready to yield to the promptings of despair. Death seemed inevitable. Why

delay the crisis, he asked himself, merely to add a few hours of dreadful torture to the broken span? He wished the last agony well over, and, laying his hand on his revolver, hesitated a moment on the brink of self-destruction, thoughts dancing in wild chaos, and reason tottering on her throne. Then came the blessed vision of wife and children, radiant with a heavenly aureola, loving, dependent, linked by the bonds of fate to a common destiny. The cloud of despair rolled off. Those faces, transfigured with celestial light, brought hope and courage, and power to endure.

Tying the lariat around the neck of the shivering horse, and buckling the reins inside the throat-latch, so that "if anything did happen," the poor animal might have a chance of reaching home, the lost traveler took up the line of march for the night in a circle around the horse about ten feet in diameter.

Language is powerless to describe the fury of the storm. The winds shrieked, and the fine snow penetrated like needles, freezing to hair, beard, and eyelids when moistened by the breath. The poor object upon whom nature was hurling her stupendous forces, was conscious of passing through a process of rapid transformation into a miniature iceberg, but he no longer required the use of eyes and mouth, and no spectators were near to laugh at his weird appearance.

Around, around, around he walked, through the hours that seemed to lengthen into ages, as if repeating, on a narrow platform, the fulfillment of the curse that rests upon the Wandering Jew. With the first refluent wave of courage, succeeding the temporary fit of despair, his spirits mounted up to exultation, but toward morning the unnatural fever died out. He grew weary, drowsy, and at moments irresolute. He felt an almost irresistible inclination to lie down, but reason warned him that if he once yielded to the impulse he would never rise again.

By aid of matches he tried to examine the dial of his

watch, but through any screen he could make of his over-coat, the wind blew with such violence that the light could not live an instant. The attempt, however, diverted the mind, broke up the monotony of plodding around that endless circle, and seemed to renew the wan stock of vitality.

After another interval of weary walking, he paused a moment to pat the horse, the act of companionship diverting



"Around, around, around he walked, through the hours that seemed to lengthen into ages."

his thoughts from his own sufferings, and rendering the hardships of the situation much more bearable.

The experience of man acquaints him with nothing else so wonderful as his own soul,—nothing with such unfathomable depths of resource and power. Here was a being alone, lost, enveloped in utter darkness, hungry, exhausted, almost deafened by the savage howlings of the tempest, who, in obedience to the voice of an inward monitor, a dual self,

struggled heroically to keep the mind active and the feet moving as the only means of resisting successfully the deadly approaches of fatigue and cold.

Toward morning, however, stiffened by frost and enfeebled by the pressure of cumulative hardships, he began to think very earnestly, after the manner of a business man, of the credit and debit sides of his account in the "Book of Life." While remembering no particular acts of depravity, still, on footing up the columns impartially, as one must under such circumstances, somehow a heavy balance appeared on the wrong side of the ledger. Making a rough estimate of the amount past due, he made a number of excellent resolutions, promising mentally that if spared to retrieve the past, when confronted again by the grim angel of Death, he would be prepared to render a better account of his stewardship.

At last the almost interminable night wore away, and a faint light began to overspread the waste. The wind, too, instead of blowing in fitful, eddying, terrific gusts, moderated in violence, and came more steadily from one direction. The phenomena of the previous night were explained by the configuration of the country. The traveler had taken a position on the lee of a small conical peak, by which the furious currents of air were deflected, so that they came simultaneously around both sides. Then they seemed, also, to bend down over the top with a sort of licking action, similar to that exhibited by the flames of a large fire when pressed down by a violent storm, or similar, on a smaller scale, to the quick retreating movement of the tongues of some animals.

In such storms the snow-fall is very great, and, being very dry, the force of the wind destroys the original formation of the flakes, breaking them into atoms as fine as mist, which increases their volume, and fills the air so completely as to render breathing difficult. The particles at length find lodgment only in the deepest gorges.

The more uniform movement observed in the blowing of the wind was caused by a change in its direction, which was accepted as a good omen ; and as such it proved, for not long after the circular disk of the sun was dimly outlined through the mists. And what a scene of weird desolation it revealed !

" Through the drifts the snowy cliffs,
Did send a dismal sheen,
Nor shapes of men, nor beast we ken,
The ice was all between."

Courage returned to the heart of the wanderer. His great anxiety now was to get out of the range as soon as possible. Finally, after a long hunt, he found a trail, and following it down the mountain with great difficulty, in the course of an hour saw a smoke. It was a moment of devout thanksgiving. Directing his horse thitherward, he soon reached the cabin of a miner, where he obtained such fare as the lonely adventurer had, seasoned by a cup of good strong coffee.

The miner could not at first believe the story of the previous night. Eying the gentleman from head to foot with a look of incredulity and wonder, as the barbarians of Melita gazed on Paul when the viper dropped harmless from his hand, he observed, in the homely and inelegant but expressive words that make up the limited vocabulary of the region, " Wall, stranger, you must have had a h—ll of a time on the mountains."

" On the contrary," replied the new-comer, " I consider that, from a religious point of view, I have had a heavenly time. I have reformed ; have dropped 'cus words' ; am going to walk as straight as a bee-line. Nothing like sweet self-communion, all alone in a snow-storm, twelve thousand feet on the way to the skies, for helping a poor sinner to see the error of his ways."

" Shouldn't wonder if that's so," replied the host ; " s'pose 't ll stick ? " His manner indicated that he did not have much faith in the permanence of the conversion. Perhaps he had in mind a notable instance of repentance under stress

of adversity ; but if so, he certainly made a great mistake in applying the precedent.

"The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be :
The devil was well, the devil a monk was he."

"I believe, after all," resumed the officer, taking a final draught of coffee, which restored his habitual flow of spirits,



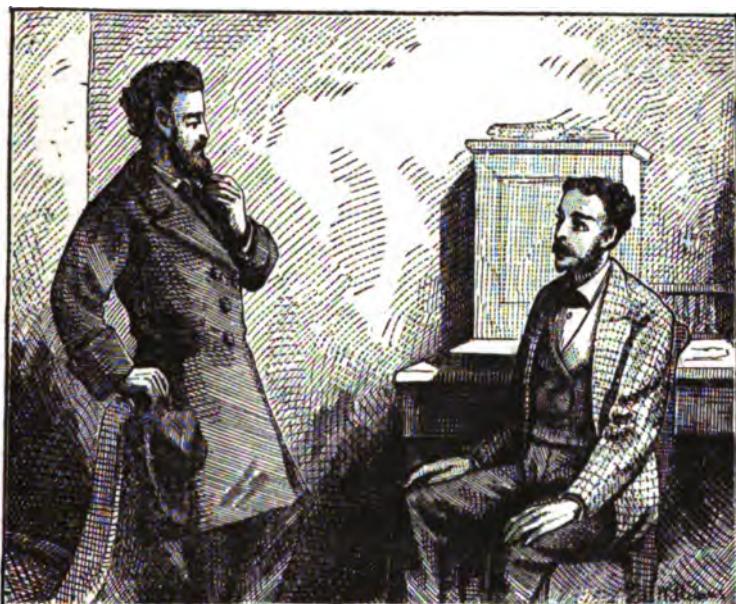
"I have reformed—have dropped 'ous words'—am going to walk as straight as a bee-line."

"I am more needed below than above, and if you will put me on the trail to Fair Play, I will give up all ambition to ascend higher at present."

The miner cheerfully complied with the request, and about four o'clock in the afternoon the officer came in sight of the little town, feeling much braver and happier than twelve hours before. Having eaten a light supper, he at once went to bed. No one in the village had missed him, or had the

slightest idea of the nature or direction of the late journey, as he set forth ostensibly to visit a ranch on the Platte.

At an early hour the next morning he was up, completely refreshed by the long sleep, and began, with some doubts and misgivings, to lay out a plan of campaign. Most detectives, similarly situated, would probably have abandoned the case on the plea that it was too old, and that the facts were too



"Taking a seat on the back of a chair, and eying the poor fellow with a cold, fixed stare."

deeply buried to be worked to a successful conclusion. The truth was known only to the criminal who committed the burglary, and if ever brought to light, it must come through his admissions. Obviously, one could learn nothing of value by "mousing around and playing wise." He accordingly decided to come out of cover at once, and to fall back on his pet expedient in like perplexities, the "grand bounce." Exactly what the "grand bounce" is the reader must infer from the

facts, as the phrase, belonging to Mr. Furay by right of discovery, has never been defined.

He began operations by a call at the post-office. Mr. Jaynes was in and alone. The special agent introduced himself by exhibiting his commission, and requested the young man to sit down for a short interview. For a long time, the deputy had been the central object of suspicion, and a painful consciousness that many distrustful eyes followed his daily movements rendered him uneasy and nervous. However, he gave a detailed account of all the circumstances connected with the robbery which were known to the public. Taking a seat on the back of a chair, and eying the poor fellow with a cold, fixed, piercing stare, the detective scarcely spoke, when he did, taking care to so modulate the tones of his voice as to indicate a confidence widely at variance with the incredulity expressed on his features. The effect of thus combining, in a manner, the characters of prosecutor and advocate, deepened the confusion of the deputy. Utterly unable to divine the opinion or purpose of his interrogator, he lost self-control, and shook with a degree of violence that would have rendered the longer retention of a guilty secret impossible.

The officer soon became satisfied that the agitation of the youth arose in part from native timidity, and in part from uncertainty in regard to the attitude of the interviewer, who studiously concealed his thoughts, with the view of making a more thorough application of the "sweating process." Without uttering an unkind word, he assumed an air of severity which alone served to overwhelm the youth, as it ordinarily does a timid, inexperienced person, whether guilty or not; but the trepidation in this case obviously had no connection with the alarm sounded by a troubled conscience. When the story was finished, the detective, fully convinced of the innocence of Jaynes, rounded to gracefully, and left him in excellent humor.

The shop of Mr. Perry lay next in order on the voyage of

discovery. He was about twenty-seven years old, tall, slim, supple, nervous in temperament, and combative in disposition, evidently not a person to submit tamely to impertinent interference, or brook language which might strike him as insolent. To reach under such a character requires care and tact, as a single imprudent word may so rouse latent antagonisms as to throw him in an instant into an attitude of defiance fatal to further progress with the case.

The detective accordingly approached him very courteously, and explained in general terms the object of his visit. Said he, "I am advised that you may possibly be possessed of valuable information, and hence have taken the liberty of calling on you."

"Come into the back room," replied the young man, cordially.

Thither they repaired and took seats beside each other, the officer meanwhile measuring his new acquaintance in point of calibre and force. He had penetrated to the marrow of Jaynes through his timidity, the retreating chin, and mild, unsteady eye of the young man clearly indicating his most vulnerable point. Perry was made of different stuff, and it was necessary to employ different means to reach the secrets of his heart. With him the detective aimed to convey the impression that, while positive, courteous, and just, he was also as keen as a Damascene blade, with the view of inspiring fear without arousing combativeness.

An idea prevails quite generally that government detectives, as a class, possess almost supernatural insight and acumen, and it is exceedingly difficult for a novice in crime to conceal his dread when brought for the first time face to face with a man supposed to be gifted with the faculty of divining the secrets of the soul. The general fact may often be turned to excellent account, where there is a sufficient basis of merit in an officer to lend a color of truth to the assumption. But under all circumstances it is needful that he should keep constantly on the alert, as a single blunder may betray the hoof

of the ass under the skin of the lion, when the spell is broken and the culprit rises to the mastery of the situation. A few men in the various departments of the government — the rare exceptions that relieve the waste of hundreds of costly and barren experiments — possess this gift of divination to a degree that may well appall the criminal, but officers so endowed may safely be reckoned among the most uncommon products of nature.

At the request of the special agent, Perry proceeded to relate the facts of the burglary, and, though a little restless under the searching scrutiny of the interviewer, he told the story with a simplicity and ingenuousness indicative of truth. Seeing that no dark secret lurked in the background, the officer left him in good humor, hardly conscious that the visit had any relation to his possible guilt.

Two out of the three suspected parties were now eliminated from the problem to the full satisfaction of the detective. If his reasoning was correct, the third one must be the man.

Beery had returned from his ranch. At this time he kept the express office in a small, isolated building, a little west of the store of Jaynes, having moved from the old location on the plea that he would have no further connection with a nest of thieves. At the same time, he issued a placard offering a reward of three hundred dollars for the apprehension of the burglar, and also wrote to the agent of Wells, Fargo & Co., at Denver, explaining what he had done, and asking for a safe. Had the man taken these steps with an honest purpose, or wickedly and infamously, like the wretch who —

“ — shipwrecked, kindles on the coast
False fires, that others may be lost ”?

Perry pointed out the gentleman while passing on the opposite side of the way, when the detective followed him into the office, taking a seat till he had completed the purchase of a small lot of gold dust from a miner.

Beery was evidently about thirty-three years old, five feet

six inches tall, and weighed perhaps one hundred and thirty-five pounds. His hair, whiskers, and complexion were all red, the color of his curly beard deepening to a bright crimson. His eyes belonged to the variety known as the "gander blue," with small, truckling, destructive pupils.

Notwithstanding an exterior decidedly repellent to a stranger, Beery had many warm friends, and had married the daughter of an estimable and influential citizen. In the course of time many important trusts centered in his hands. He transacted the business in the office of the receiver of public moneys for the district, and also in the office of county treasurer, being the deputy of each of those functionaries. He was also agent of the First National Bank of Denver for the purchase of gold dust from miners, and was the trusted agent of Wells, Fargo & Co.; for they had unbounded faith in his integrity, and confided in him perhaps more than in any one else among the mountains. Nor was this all. The Colorado Stage Company committed their most important business to his management, often leaving their surplus funds in his hands, feeling absolute confidence in its safety. He owned a ranch, too, and cattle, and was supposed to live above the reach of the temptations which are often permitted to drive the needy to crime.

The detective had been pointed out to Beery on the street, and at the first encounter of eyes he saw that he was known. In the brief interval preceding the first gun, he studied the features and expression of the man intently. In time, actions both good and evil are certain to leave their impress upon the human face, as clear to the eye gifted with the power to read the hieroglyphics, as the imprint made by a seal on wax. Nature never lies, however small the number who can interpret her mysteries. His first thought was, How can a person with such a face enjoy so fair a reputation among his neighbors? "Sneak thief" seemed to be branded in letters of flame on his forehead. Nor were the lines graven by multiplied acts of villainy either shallow or recent. A convict could

hardly wear more conspicuously the regulation livery of the prison.

The detective mentally ejaculated, Here is my man, but how am I to get under him? A moment only was left for deliberation. As the miner passed out, he followed to the door, and having locked it, put the key in his pocket as leisurely and unconcernedly as if the transaction was purely commonplace. Turning around, he remarked, with perfect composure, "Billy Beery, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," responded that worthy. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"There is," replied the officer, at the same time fairly *uttering* a sickly, jeering smile. "There is something you can do for me. Please come around and sit down. I want to talk to you."

While locking the door, the officer noticed a mysterious movement, and, surmising that the tenant of the building might use a pistol on the pretext that he was held a prisoner for the purpose of robbery, moved along simultaneously so as to meet him at the end of the counter, behind which he was passing. Fortunately, perhaps for both, he was unarmed. Instead of taking a chair, Beery mounted a high box, when the detective dropped heavily into a seat about five feet distant, as one might after completing a laborious and disagreeable task. Having done so, he remarked, "Mr. Beery, I see you know who I am."

"Yes, sir," replied he; "you were pointed out to me this morning."

Very slowly and deliberately the officer then looked him over, beginning at his boots, and at last directing his gaze into his eye with a penetration that seemed to appall and paralyze him. The silence was broken by the further question, "Of course you know what I am, and what I am here for?"

"I suppose you are here on this post-office robbery case."

"Billy, you are a close guesser, I see. As I have had occasion to visit this territory several times on similar business,

you have perhaps heard of me, and know what my reputation is. Now tell me how old you are."

This was uttered with a regretful air, as if the speaker was impelled by some irresistible influence, like an overpowering sense of duty, to the performance of a very unpleasant task.

A slight but perceptible tremor vibrated through the frame of the unhappy man. He gave his age mechanically, as it were, without looking up. The strange, wholly unexpected "shoot" taken by the detective had half surprised a confession from the criminal already. Dazed by the suddenness of the attack and by exaggerated fears, he lost his balance, and was almost ready to topple over.

"Well, Billy," continued the officer, "this is too bad. You have an interesting family, and—"

The allusion to his household instantly changed the current of his thoughts. He rallied, and, bounding from the box like a wild beast stung to madness by the shafts of the hunter, exclaimed, with an oath, "What business is it of yours whether I have an interesting family or not? In what way do my personal affairs concern you, that you presume to discuss them? I will not bear such insolence. Leave the room this instant, and on your peril do not dare ever darken my doors again!"

The little speech, though brave in sound, proved a dismal failure. Physically the detective was greatly superior to his antagonist, while to personal fear he was by nature and habit a stranger. In a tone of easy superiority he replied, "Well, Billy, you are a little queer in spots. Now sit down here and be easy. I am not a fool, and, at all events, I am not a coward. Before I am through, I will give reasons as plenty as blackberries for my questions. Right here, Billy, I may as well repeat what you know, what I know, and what the God above us knows. You robbed the post-office. You got that dreadful gold that is even now burning into your life like the fires of Tophet. The crime itself, reinforced by other crimes and cruel wrongs, committed in the vain hope of hiding what

will not remain hidden; what infinite Justice sooner or later would surely drag into light, irrespective of human efforts, is killing you by degrees. Am I not right? Are your days happy? Is your sleep peaceful? No, Billy. With you, hell has begun on earth, and you cannot escape the tortures. More than that, poor fellow, discovery and the retribution of man, have come sooner than you expected. Moth that you



"Well, Billy, you are a little queer in spots. Now sit down here and be easy. I am not a fool, and, at all events, I am not a coward."

are, you have fluttered into the flame, and, Billy Beery, I've got you."

The last sentence, delivered in a tone of absolute self-assurance, seemed to freeze him. After a brief and evidently painful pause, he at length drawled out, "How do you know I did it?"

"Know it! know it!" thundered the detective, in apparent amazement at the stupidity of the question. "Why, heavens,

man, you don't presume to deny it, do you? Answer me that, Billy, — answer me that."

And rising up, he lifted his arm as if to hold back for a moment the thunderbolts of divine wrath, that vengeance might not overwhelm the guilty soul till one more opportunity was given to unburden itself of the dark secret.

"I'd like to see you prove it!" replied the trembling wretch, with feeble bravo.

"Prove it?" retorted the detective, with augmented surprise. "O, you poor, unfortunate man, leave the proofs to me! Did you ever think, Billy, how impossible it is to cover up such a matter? The laws of God, superior to all human cunning, forbid that it should be done. When a mortal being, in a moment of supreme folly, defies the wrath of the Almighty by trampling on his laws, can he expect the all-seeing Eye and the omnipotent Hand to suffer him to enjoy in concealment and security the fruits of crime? Never, never. Prove it? If I did not have proof absolute, would I be talking to you as I am? Why am I not after Jaynes? Billy, he is not guilty. Why am I not after Perry? He is not guilty either. You know it, and I know it. Do you suppose the government would send an idiot out here on a fool's errand? Now, sir, we may as well finish this business first as last. Where is that gold?"

"I don't know anything about it," responded the wretched man, feebly.

"Billy, what demon tempts you to lie to me? What do you take me for? Do you suppose I am here for fun? If you think so, may God have mercy on your guilty, impenitent, ruined soul. Come, sir, time is too precious to be wasted. Where is the gold? What have you done with it?"

"I can't tell you."

"Can't tell me! Billy Beery, has not that dreadful robbery led you into crimes enough already? Think how hard you have striven to blast forever the reputation of your old friend Jaynes — a man as innocent of this thing as the child unborn.

Yes, hardened wretch, remember how you have plotted to drag to prison the comrade who loved and trusted you like a brother. You took no pleasure in this act of horrible treachery, but rushed into it madly to save yourself at any cost. Recall the falsehoods you have already told, vainly hoping to mislead the pursuit of Justice. It is high time to come out from the crumbling refuge of lies and take a new start. What, in the name of all that is good and pure and worth living for, ever induced you to yield to that temptation? You have a nice wife and a darling child. Was it for them you committed the crime?"

At length an arrow had pierced through a joint in the harness, and the self-convicted burglar began to cry. His chin dropped upon his breast, and his sinewy frame shook with convulsive sobbing. The detective followed up the advantage closely. "O, Billy, tell me what drove you into it! Speak out. Don't be afraid."

He hesitated, raising his eyes with an introspective, irresolute look, as if half resolved to end the agony by a frank confession. Before a word escaped, however, he resumed sobbing. The detective saw that he was rapidly breaking up, and that the time had come to deliver the final blow. "Billy," he continued, "I am profoundly sorry for you. My pursuits in life have made me familiar with the antecedents and trials of many, from different grades of society, whom the world with singular lack of discernment classes indiscriminately as 'criminals.' I have learned to look upon the poor unfortunates in many cases with far more of pity than resentment. The offenders with whom I am brought in contact are not generally hardened wretches, as the world ignorantly supposes, but just such people as we meet every day, no better, no worse; the difference being that some in an unguarded moment have yielded to temptation, doing, under a mad, unaccountable impulse, what they would give their lives to recall; while others, more fortunate, if not more firmly grounded in the principles of honesty, have been spared the

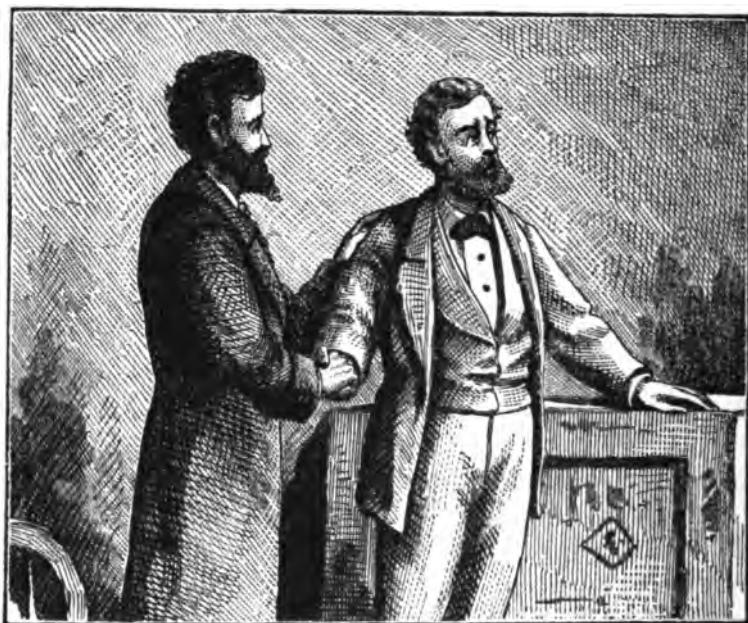
humiliation by the kind Providence who has guided their steps through less perilous pathways. . Some may evade for a long time the inevitable penalty. Sooner or later, however, it is sure to overtake them. It so happens that you have been apprehended early, before your character has had time to harden into hopeless criminality. You will live to thank God that the discovery was not postponed. I can sympathize deeply with the man who, overborne by what he believed to be a dire necessity, falls in a moment of frenzy. It is indeed pitiable that for the weakness of one hour, he should suffer so long and so terribly. Billy, what was it, tell me, that pressed, that drove you into this?"

The poor fellow, unable to hold out longer, gave up completely. Taking the hand of the detective with the gentleness of a woman, he sobbed out, "Stranger, it is no use. I see it is no use. My guilt has found me out. I took the gold. O, my God, why did I do it? Is there mercy in heaven for such as me?"

Only the salient points have been given of the conversation which lasted about three hours, before the resistance of the criminal, undermined by the heavy battering from without, and within by the spectral fears born of a tortured conscience, yielded to the superior nerve force of the detective. The poor fellow was passing through the crucible of the chemist. His character was dissected and analyzed till the complex structure was resolved into its constituent elements. In his case how different the reality from the semblance, the being from the seeming, the inward substance from the outward show! An ingrained coward, he was reputed to be "the bravest man in the mountains." A thief and a perjurer, he was trusted with the custody of uncounted cash. Now the mask, worn successfully for years, was stripped off, and the hideous deformities laid bare.

His leading characteristics were vanity and love of applause, raised to the dignity of controlling forces by an overgrowth of destructiveness that had in it no element of courage. Had he

been born a Cheyenne chief, he would, under cover of darkness, have crept up valiantly to the settlements of an enemy for the scalps of the sleeping and defenseless. In a southern negro the same qualities would make Cuffy an obsequious servant in the house, and a hero in the kitchen, the plotter of midnight expeditions against the hen-coops of the vicinage, whence the leader would bear off the prizes, leaving some



"Stranger, it is no use. My guilt has found me out. I took the gold. O, my God, why did I do it?"

thick-skulled dupe to take the blows. The timid desperadoes who infest large cities, killing when cornered, are made of similar stuff. Born, however, amid moral surroundings, and taught in youth to work, he belonged to the large class that, growing from without rather than from within, are ordinarily molded by the prevalent influences about them, and, keeping their evil propensities measurably in check, often succeed in

leading respected and honored lives. Amid revolutions, or great social upheavals, such men, lured on by thirst for praise, under the doubtful pilotage of plausibility and cunning, sometimes win for the moment notoriety and prominence.

Beery acquired a reputation for bravery by carrying the treasure of Wells, Fargo & Co. to Denver on horseback at a time when the road was infested with highwaymen, and the stages were afraid to run. It was, however, a greed for applause that prompted the undertaking, and, having once embarked in the enterprise, fear of derision held him to its execution.

The special agent had discovered the thief. Two further duties remained: he must, if possible, recover the stolen treasure for the benefit of the owners, and obtain the legal evidence requisite for the conviction of the criminal. The task was exceedingly difficult, as the detective had no previous information to operate on, and was forced to win from the burglar the secrets to be used as ammunition in each successive stage of the attack.

He only knew that about sixty-six ounces of gold were contained in the package, with some currency and checks, but had no details whatever, having been prevented by the storm on the mountains from learning the facts from the remitters. He did not know what kind of dust it was; whether "coarse gulch," "retorted fine," or "milling;" whether it contained any peculiar nuggets, or milling-bars; whether it was a "straight lot" from one gulch, or a mixed lot from several; whether it was all mailed by one person or by more, or whether it was tied in a single package or in many. All these facts Dramful knew from the papers in the case, but he was then dreaming on them in New Mexico.

Again, if Beery committed the burglary, he must have operated while Jaynes was at his house, indicating that, although the invitations were issued the day before, the party was given with a view to facilitate the robbery in case the mail should bring valuable packages. Yet it was unsafe

to hazard any remark in reference to the time, as a mistake, however slight, might expose the game of bluff.

The side-window was raised six and three eighths inches, appearances strongly indicating that some one had tried to enter by that way ; but Beery had long been an occupant of the building, and might, without the knowledge of the proprietor, have a key to one of the doors. If so, he of course raised the sash and dusted the sill as a blind. The theory of the false key seemed the more credible, as the agent did not believe that a man weighing a hundred and thirty pounds could crawl through so small an opening. Still, in hazarding a point he might not guess right, and a blunder would be fatal.

Assuming that Beery was guilty, how came the registered package-envelope in the cellar? All the current statements concurred in representing that the party searched each other thoroughly before going down. Yet he and no one else must have put it there. But when and how? Here, too, the ice was too thin to be trusted.

The finding of the paper and twine in Beery's stable indicated that the package was opened there ; but the detective had never seen either, and hence did not know whether the wrapping was cut or torn. Nor was it by any means certain that the rifling was consummated at that place, so that any assumption based on this particular discovery might explode a mine into empty air. In short, the officer was absolutely bare-handed of facts. He had nothing but acumen and native wit to depend upon. Hence, the only feasible course was to fly his kite high, looking and acting severely wise, until he could feel around for the weak spots of the suspected criminal, which were soon found to be vanity and cowardice. As the tactics developed, the victim became badly frightened, and, believing that the officer had somehow discovered the truth, at length broke down from sheer lack of strength to hold out longer against the heavy artillery of his adversary. In talking the matter over afterwards, he ex-

plained the nature of his apprehensions. He supposed that he had been shadowed while visiting the hidden treasure, or that some one had seen him enter or leave the post-office on the night of the burglary, and had communicated secretly with the department, which in response had sent out one of its most terrible agents. Still he tried very hard to find out just what the detective did know, but was always put off with some evasive reply, as, "Never mind; you will learn soon enough what I've got."

As already stated, the conversation lasted over three hours before the wretched man admitted the crime, tacking hither and thither in the idle hope that some lull in the gale might yet save the water-logged craft from wreck. When the acknowledgment came, the officer responded, "Why, of course you are guilty. Now let us sit down and talk sense awhile. You have told one vital truth, and, I trust, are in no humor to fall back again upon the line of falsehood. Lies never saved a man in the hour of extremity, and never will. Tell me how much of this money you still have. In an evil moment you did a great wrong to the poor people who intrusted their means to the mails. Complete now the good work you have begun, for there is no evidence of repentance that will satisfy either God or man without confession and restitution. The two must go hand in hand. Billy, let me have that money."

The burglar sat motionless, sobbing bitterly. The officer continued: "Come, nerve up, and start life anew as an honest, truthful, just man. You can still retrieve the past, if you go to work the right way."

"O God!" he replied, "what a fool I have been. I wish I were dead! A part of the money is spent, but some of it I have still."

"About how much, Billy, is there left?"

"I suppose there may be twenty or twenty-five ounces of the dust," he answered, still sobbing.

"Well, where are the checks?" queried the detective,

anxious to get possession of some of the original property to be used as evidence at the trial.

"I destroyed them. They were of no account, however, and the parties lost nothing. But, Mr. Furay, are you going to carry me away with you? If so, I may as well die for a sheep as a lamb."

The appearance and manner of the man changed entirely. He quit sobbing, cooled down, and was evidently passing on to the stage of desperation. He then repeated the question, "Come, are you going to arrest me? I want to know."

It would never do to let hope die out of his heart. "Why, no," replied the officer. "You unfortunate, foolish man, what have I to gain by arresting you?"

"Isn't that what you are here for?"

"No. Sit down, and I will tell you what I am here for. I am no marshal clothed with authority to arrest. I am a special agent, and as such empowered to exercise a wide discretion in the performance of my duties. I propose to do what is about right, and hope to succeed to the reasonable satisfaction of all parties."

"Furay," replied the burglar, not addressing him this time as *Mr.*, "I want to know whether you intend to arrest me, and I am going to get an answer out of you."

"How many times," replied he, "must I assure you that I am not. Sit down, and do not act like a fool."

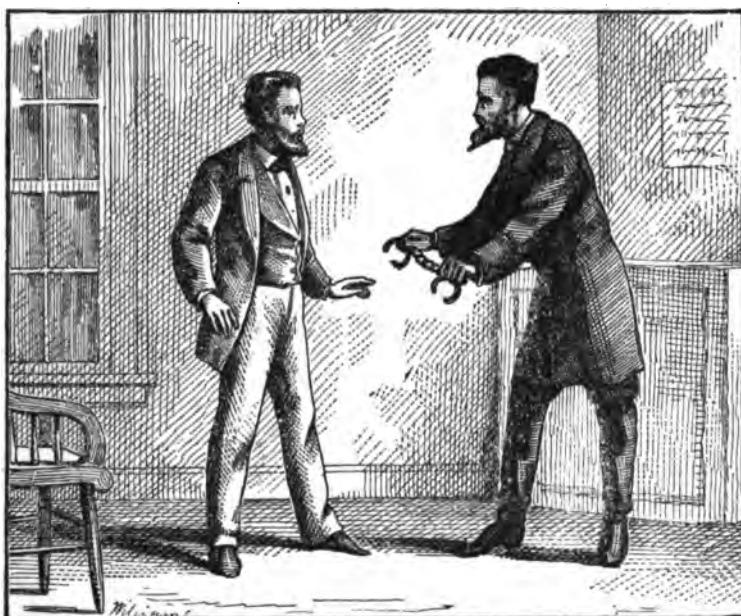
Somehow the detective had lost his grip. However, the burglar sat down with the recklessness of despair depicted on his countenance.

"Billy," resumed the officer, "I never before met a man like you, though I have encountered some strange ones. What on earth ails you? Now listen to me —"

"No," he retorted, jumping up; "I will not listen to anything from you, or from anybody else."

"All right," thundered the officer. "If you will not listen, I'll make you feel. Billy Beery, if you insist on being a

fool, and in making the disgrace of yourself and of your family a matter of necessity, so let it be." With the last word, he jerked from the armhole on the left side of his vest a pair of handcuffs, and continued: "Then you are resolved not to listen to reason. Since you drive me to it, put them on, put them on, I say," holding each one open. "As you are determined to have the iron burn to the bone, you shall be accommodated."



"All right," thundered the officer. "If you will not listen, I'll make you feel."

The last words were uttered in a tone of terrible determination. The criminal, looking furtively toward the door where different parties had been knocking and trying to enter all the morning, whispered in a tone of subdued entreaty, "Hsh-h-h. Do not talk so loud, please."

"What do you suppose I care who hears my voice or my words, since you persist in driving me to extremities? I'll

make this matter ring for you in every cañon in Colorado if by your folly you compel me to do it."

"Hush! For God's sake, hush! You will have the whole town at the door. I have acted like a fool. I will listen. Tell me what you want."

"I want you to be a man, as you set out to be a little while ago," replied the detective, again taking charge of the situation. "I am not inclined to be severe, but I can be if you leave me no alternative. Yes, if you force me to it, every man, woman, and child in this territory shall know of your disgrace, and you can then thank yourself for bringing down the public scorn upon your head."

But the fellow had become too desperate to respond readily to appeals addressed either to his sympathies or fears. In that state of mind, one could no more touch his heart than wash the skin of a duck by pouring water on its back. With the cord slowly tightening about his neck, light turned to darkness, and life became a burden. He evidently wanted to see his wife once more, disclose where the stolen treasure was hidden, and then blow his brains out. The detective, recalling his own late experience on the mountain, appreciated more keenly the hopeless thoughts and rash projects then surging in wild disorder through that perturbed brain. Suppose he should kill himself, thought the officer, for my part in firing the train, shouldn't I always feel like a "bobtailed" murderer?

After a reflective pause, the burglar inquired, "I suppose you came up here to capture me, and it looks as if you had succeeded. I have been frank with you; now tell me, how many are in your secret?"

In framing the first words of the reply, the officer inadvertently almost gave away his game of bluff by betraying the emptiness of his hand. "No one knows a thing of this that you need ever fear. I, and I alone, control the case. What I want done will be done. Tell me in turn how you want the matter fixed, for fixed in some way it must be.

But bear in mind I have no right to agree to anything unless the money is restored. That must be done before we can talk about terms of adjustment."

The face of the robber kindled with renewed hope, and he replied in a more cheerful tone, "If you will promise not to arrest me, I can give you over twenty-five ounces now, and pay a part of the currency. The balance I'll make good within thirty days. But before I turn over a cent, I want your written promise that I will not be arrested."

"Bring me the paper," replied the officer, "and you shall have the guaranty." At the same time he keenly felt that the rogue was crowding him into a somewhat humiliating position. Besides discovering who the thief was, he desired both to bring him to justice and recover the property. Yet a promise, though given to a criminal, must be kept sacred. Evidence to convict could only be obtained from the guilty man himself, and, obtained under a pledge, could not honorably be used.

Having walked to the desk, the officer picked up a pen, and began: "This is to certify that I have this day received from William H. Beery, of Fair Clay, Colorado, —— ounces of gold dust, the same having been unlawfully taken by him from a certain registered package —"

The robber, who was watching the pen, here interrupted the progress of the work. "Say, it is not necessary to put that in, is it?"

"Of course it is. I must be specific in framing the document, and as it is only for your own eye, what difference can it make?"

"Well, then, never mind. I'll take your word, as I don't want any writing to lie around to be picked up by some Paul Pry, and get a fellow into trouble. I'll give you the dust this evening, but for God's sake don't tell a living creature. Here are a hundred dollars in currency, which you can take now."

The detective took the money and left the office, chilled,

hungry, and well-nigh exhausted by the struggle which had been prolonged with varying success from nine or ten o'clock in the morning till three in the afternoon. Wherever he went he was the "observed of all observers," for Jaynes and Perry, impressed by the interviews it was their privilege to enjoy, freely expressed the opinion that the government had at last sent out "chain-lightning itself" to hunt up the mysterious burglar.

A little after dark he returned to the express office, having kept up during the interim a show of hot pursuit, in order that no one might suspect the fact of discovery. This time Beery locked the door. He then produced a buckskin bag containing thirty ounces and five pennyweights of the precious dust.

"Did you find all this in the original package?" inquired the detective, confidentially.

"All but the five ounces of retorted dust which I was buying when you came in this morning."

"What gulch is it from?"

"Why, from California Gulch, of course."

"So far so good," thought the officer, as he thrust the package into his pocket.

"I can have the balance by the 1st of December, or certainly by Christmas," said the burglar, who began to figure on the amount still due, for he was honest now. "It will be about six hundred dollars in currency, which I will send to you."

"Instead of remitting the money," suggested the agent, "cannot you meet me in Denver, and deliver it in person?"

It was finally agreed that they should meet there, at the Tremont House, on the 10th of January, when the balance of the stolen property, or its value, was to be paid over. Having finished the business arrangements, the burglar sat down and told the story of the robbery. In substance it ran thus: —

"At the time I was terribly pressed for money. I gave the

party to get Jaynes away from the post-office, anticipating that the mail, as usual, would contain one or more valuable packages. The fruit was forgotten purposely. On my way back I slipped up behind some boxes, which I had piled up the previous day as a screen, raised the window from the outside, and actually crawled through the small opening. In a moment I seized the package, and was out again. On the way to the house I passed by the stable, and tossed it into the manger of a vacant stall. As soon as the company dispersed I broke it open, and hid the contents in an adjacent lot, moving them several times afterwards. In preparing for the search of the post-office, I placed the package-envelope next to my flesh, so that when I pulled off my coat and vest, no one suspected what was hidden under my tight-fitting flannel. I raised the trap-door, and, going part way down, told the boys they would have to have a candle. While they were lighting it, I pulled out the envelope, and threw it as far as I could in the dark, and of course avoided going near that part of the cellar myself. The sheriff found it as I intended he should. The rest you know, Furay, better than I can tell you."

The next morning the special agent left Fair Play, and reached Denver November 1st, at daybreak. After a short nap he hunted up Judge Bennett and the departmental officer before alluded to, and pulling out the buckskin bag, displayed his trophies of conquest. They were delighted and astonished, for, with all their faith in the skill of the detective, neither entertained the most remote expectation that he would return with the stolen property.

The secret was intrusted to these two gentlemen, with strict injunctions to tell no one except Dramful, till the six hundred dollars still due were safely in hand. It was necessary to inform him, as he contemplated arresting Jaynes on returning from New Mexico, — a catastrophe to be averted at all hazards.

According to agreement, the officer called at the Tremont

House, in Denver, on the 10th of January, but Beery failed to keep the engagement. He had been there, and left. Meanwhile, through the imprudence and ill-temper of Dramful, the secret had leaked out, and the burglar, overwhelmed with shame and confusion, resolved, if possible, to carry the work of restitution no further. On the 16th, however, he turned up in person, and insisted that the special agent should accompany him to the office of his lawyer; and he, with some reluctance, finally consented. There, by adroit management in directing the current of the conference, the detective drew the robber on to tell the whole story of the crime in the presence of his own counsel, a circumstance likely to embarrass somewhat the flow of his eloquence if ever compelled to plead in defense of his client. Again the officer demanded the six hundred dollars, but, put off with evasive answers, soon discovered that the burglar and his advisers were determined not to refund another cent.

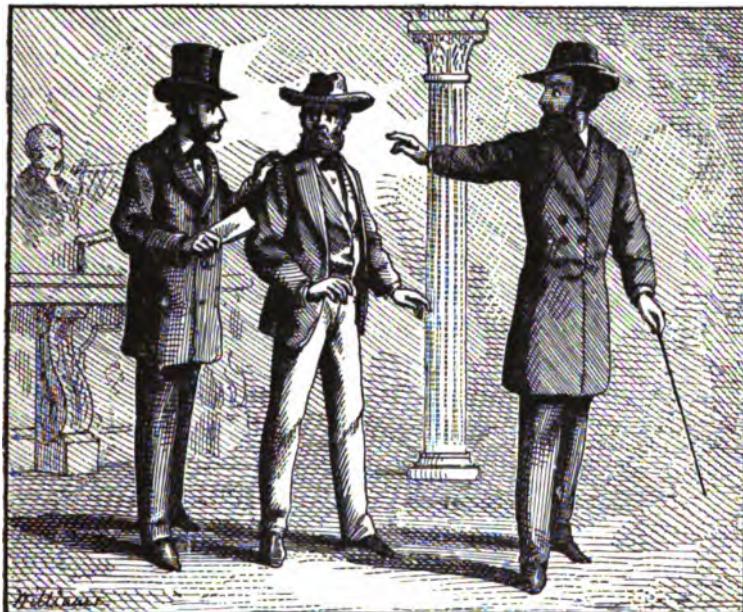
As the criminal had broken the agreement, the special agent argued that he was no longer bound by his own conditional promise, and hence decided to bring the case before the grand jury the next day, the district attorney preparing the indictments that night so as to have them in readiness. Arrangements were made to shadow Beery, so that he might have no opportunity for escape.

That night the special agent accepted an invitation from Beery to occupy the same room and bed. Before retiring, the burglar took a package from his valise with so much agitation and effort at concealment, that his companion made him give it up, and found it to be a bottle of crystallized strychnine. What use he intended to make of the poison the fellow would not confess, but the discovery had a very wakening influence on the officer, who never slept an instant, not knowing at what moment the poniard of the assassin might strike his heart.

About noon the next day the special agent told the story of the robbery to the grand jury, and was followed by Mr. H.

A. W. Tabor, of Oro City, the capitalist who remitted the dust. The latter identified the gold as a portion of the contents of the stolen package, recognizing several nuggets, and especially one which, on account of its peculiar color, he had carried a long time in his pocket. The indictments were duly found, and the *capias* issued.

Meeting the criminal about dark at the hotel, the special



"Officer, here is your man; do your duty."

agent said, "Well, Billy Beery, I have kept my part of the agreement. I came at the time set. You were not here. I waited six days, and when you did come, you failed to fulfill your promise. Officer," turning to a deputy marshal, who contrived to stand conveniently near, "here is your man; do your duty." So at last, on the 17th of January, 1872, the robber went to jail for his crimes.

By virtue of marriage relationships the prisoner had the support of wealthy and influential friends. Through their

exertions, bail for five thousand dollars was given, and the case continued till the April term. Meanwhile they also deposited six hundred dollars with the First National Bank of Denver, "To the credit of the Treasurer of the United States, for the relief of persons suffering from the robbery of the mails at Fair Play, by (as alleged) Wm. H. Beery."

A prominent lawyer of the territory then hastened to Washington to procure from the attorney-general that deadly implement of partiality and injustice, a *nolle pros.*, predicating the appeal on the claim that full restitution had been made. Getting wind of the movement, the special agent followed in hot haste, and succeeded in frustrating the plot.

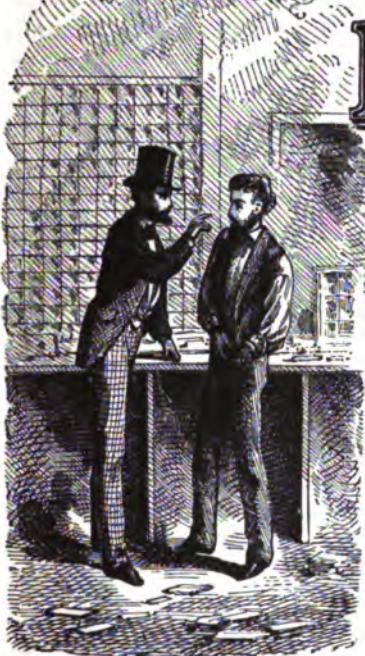
From Washington the officer hurried back to Denver, to see what shape the deposit of six hundred dollars was in. The mouths of the lawyers were fairly watering for the juicy plum, but the special agent was resolved that their palates should never be gratified by a taste of the fruit. After a long struggle the deposit was transferred from the bank to the United States treasury, where it lodged for several months. It was subsequently turned over to the postmaster-general, who, through Mr. Furay, paid it to the parties that had been robbed.

Again the case was postponed from the April term till November. The trial then took place and lasted three days. The prisoner was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for five years; but his counsel moved for a new trial on points of law, and the motion was sustained.

Once more the battle-field was transferred from Colorado to Washington, and in this instance a powerful combination succeeded in persuading Attorney-General Williams to order a *nolle pros.*; and thus ignominiously ended the case. The special agent made a prolonged and heroic fight, leaving no effort untried to secure for justice her dues; but a hand heavier than his barred the prison-door from within.

In the interests of this case, Mr. Furay made thirteen round trips from Omaha to Denver, and it cost him in all over ten thousand miles of travel. When the final record of us all is made up, he can certainly claim that he did his full duty.

PLIE TOBACCO.



"And you are the man who robbed
that registered letter."

sired to know if his presence in Chicago would facilitate the investigation.

The case was now reported by Chicago to special agent J. S. Beard. Without loss of time, Mr. Beard hastened to Iowa, and dropped down as if by accident upon the mailing

LATE in the year 1870 the postmaster at Chicago received a registered letter from an office in the interior of Iowa, which, according to the descriptive circular inclosed, should have started on the journey with seven hundred dollars' surplus money-order funds, but which arrived at its destination despoiled of its valuable contents. He immediately wrote to the remitter, stating the facts, and suggesting that possibly through oversight he had neglected to inclose the bills. An answer was promptly returned that there could be no mistake, as the work was done deliberately in the presence of a witness. The remitter de-

office. After inspecting the accounts, he inquired of Mr. George W. Jacobs, the postmaster, whether there were any losses of registered or unregistered matter to report. When informed of the package received at Chicago in a rifled condition, the officer expressed surprise, and proceeded to draw out the more superficial particulars. Without reserve or evasion, Jacobs gave the amount of the remittance, the name of the witness, a description of the bills, the date of dispatch, and the route of transmission.

On inquiry, the postmaster was found to stand high in the community. He was a prominent member of the church, and, besides other trusts, had filled the responsible position of township treasurer.

The officer then called upon Mr. T. J. Drummond, the witness, who stated that he was present when Jacobs made up the package, and saw him inclose therein seven hundred dollars. If one could trust the testimony of the senses, there could be no mistake about the matter. At the suggestion of the special agent he made a written affidavit, setting forth the facts.

Personal inquiry at the village bank elicited the further information that on the day of mailing, Jacobs exchanged other currency for three bills, one of five hundred dollars, and two of one hundred dollars each. At the same time, as shown by the books, he owed the government just seven hundred dollars on money-order account. So far the essential statement of the postmaster seemed to be corroborated by the collateral circumstances attending the transaction.

From this point, mails take a zigzag course to Chicago, passing over one stage line and three different railroads. At that time they were also delayed in transit at three intermediate offices. The special agent followed the package over the route, inspecting records and scrutinizing men, but found nothing on the way to justify the slightest suspicion. The receiving clerk at Chicago, though young, enjoyed a high reputation, commanding the entire confidence of every one.

Well-nigh disheartened, the officer again examined the registered package envelope, and in the upper right-hand corner of the flap discovered little particles of plug-tobacco, evidently deposited from the tongue while moistening the mucilage. Here was a clue which might lead to the detection of the robber. The "tracer" revealed the name of every person who handled the letter in transit, and the next step was to find which one of these used "the weed" in that form.

Going back over the line, the special agent interviewed the clerks and route agents *seriatim*, calling on each for a "chew," and finding that all who used the article at all, used "fine-cut." At length, on a raw December day, he alighted from the stage at the door of the mailing office, thoroughly chilled, and, without waiting to warm, so anxious was he for the result, after the exchange of greetings, drew out an empty tobacco pouch, and casting a wistful look upon its naked linings, remarked, "Mr. Jacobs, can you give me a chew? I'm out."

"O, yes," replied the obliging postmaster, producing a ponderous "twist" from the depths of his pocket; "but I do not think you will like my kind. I use plug."

"So I see; and you are the man who robbed that registered letter of seven hundred dollars," answered the special agent, unconsciously injecting into the tones of his voice the indignation and wrath which had been for several days accumulating. The explosion came so unexpectedly that the concussion nearly extinguished the postmaster.

Rallying from the shot, he replied, "You detectives have seared consciences to charge honest men with guilt."

"No one knows better than yourself," retorted the special agent, "that I bring no false charge against you. I speak the truth, and in due time can prove my words. You still have the money: it belongs to the government, and I must have it."

After listening to further denials, the officer took out his watch, with the remark, "I will give you just ten minutes to produce the bills. If you fail, you must take the consequences. A word to the wise is sufficient."

Turning alternately red and white, Jacobs implored the privilege of visiting his wife and infant child. "You can go," said the officer; "but I must accompany you."

After a walk of half a mile, they entered together the humble home of the postmaster, where the troublesome guest was invited to a seat in the parlor. The room was scantily furnished, presenting few objects to attract the eye.

The narrative of what followed, bears a strong family resemblance, it must be admitted, to the cheap inventions of fiction, but is, nevertheless, strictly true. Embarrassed by the painful novelty of the situation, Mr. Beard nervously picked up

an old-fashioned daguerreotype case lying upon the table. As the watchful eye of the postmaster caught the movement, a deadly pallor overspread his face, and so strong was his emotion that he nearly tottered to the floor. At that instant his wife with a young infant entered the room, when, with a half insane gesture, the husband tried to wave her back as if from the edge of an abyss.

These extraordinary actions heightened the perceptions of the special agent. Removing the picture from the case, he found secreted behind it, one five and two one hundred dollar notes — the

"Removing the picture, . . . he found secreted behind it, one five and two one hundred dollar notes."

identical money obtained from the bank for transmission in the rifled letter.



The dishonest and ruined man now pleaded earnestly for mercy, on the grounds of faithful service during the war, and the helpless condition of his family. He alleged that, though intrusted with large sums of money, he had never stolen before, and could not explain why in this instance he had been so weak as to yield to temptation. He continued: "I have an almost angel wife and innocent babe. For their sake do not disgrace me before the world. I enlisted in the beginning of the war, and lost a leg in the advance on Atlanta, having been wounded twice before. Ask General B—— what my standing was in the army and at home, but do not mention this transaction. I could never look him in the face again if he knew how I have abused the confidence he always reposed in me."

The matter was referred to the department, and through the active exertions of one or two former comrades, a stay of proceedings was secured. As the previous character of Jacobs had been blameless, old associates argued that he must have sinned through some real, but hidden and unsuspected mental infirmity. At all events, the department was strongly disposed toward the exercise of clemency, and as the money was recovered, the case finally drifted out of sight without coming before the courts.

The agony of the faithless official, growing out of the dread of exposure not less than the fear of punishment, and colored somewhat, it is to be hoped, by the sorrows of genuine penitence, found expression in a letter addressed to the special agent while the question of criminal prosecution was still pending.

"**M**Y DEAR SIR: I write you to plead your continued mercy for the sake of my family. You have been very kind to me. Please do not crush me now, but continue your mercy.

"Mr. Drummond came in this evening. I told him I was forced by the peculiar circumstances in which I was placed to resign, and asked him to keep it to himself, and let it pass for a voluntary resignation. He promised to do so. Now please

do not write to Mr. Drummond in regard to my confession, or the manner in which the affair terminated."

At the time of mailing the rifled letter, Jacobs deceived the witness by adroitly substituting a fac-simile envelope, prepared for the purpose, in the place of the one containing the seven hundred dollars. By the admission of the postmaster, the original was afterward burned.

From the day of detection onward, the demon of unrest seemed to hold possession of the poor sinner. His little home, that might have been a paradise radiant with the happiness which flows in perennial streams from purity and virtue, was soon broken up. Overwhelmed by the disgrace, he could not endure the humiliation of going in and out in the presence of neighbors who had known him in the days of innocence and peace. He became a wanderer on the face of the earth, drifting aimlessly from place to place, and living in continual fear that the officers of justice were on his track.

UNFAITHFUL MESSENGERS.



"**M**erchants, bankers, and others, do not hesitate to commit the custody of their mails to mere boys."

PERILS to correspondence are by no means restricted to the periods when letters are in the actual custody of the postal authorities. Although there is no method for arriving at exact proportions, it is safe to say that, in cities like New York, far greater loss and annoyance are caused by depredations occurring outside of the office than within, through the dishonesty of the messengers employed by corporations and business houses. Often, too, the most aggravating impediments are thrown in the way of the officers who undertake the detection of the culprits, on account of the pertinacity with which the sufferers insist that the trouble cannot possibly originate among

their own employés. As shown by innumerable examples, there is a painful readiness in such cases to denounce the whole post-office establishment as a den of thieves, and at the same time an invincible repugnance to the acceptance of any theory that would locate the leak nearer home. The same law of

human nature which leads a man to regard his own wife and child as the best, embraces, in a greater or less degree, every person and object connected with his establishment: When compared with the external horde, even the half-paid errand-boy borrows a glory from the countenance of his master.

Merchants, bankers, and others, whose wits have been sharpened by innumerable conflicts in the battle of life, and who learn with rare skill to trust important undertakings to the guaranty of faces, do not hesitate to commit the custody of their mails to mere boys, whose services are hardly deemed worthy of pecuniary recognition. As a class, these messengers are overworked and under-paid. Not a few are the sons of widows, whose sustenance, with that of younger brothers and sisters, is drawn in part from their meagre wages. Occasionally the pressure of home poverty, favored by abundant opportunities to steal, overcomes the scruples of conscience. Far more frequently, however, the erring fall through ambition to rival associates in dress and outward show, or to procure means for vicious indulgences.

It would require several pages even to catalogue the outside delinquents apprehended by special agent Sharretts in New York city during the past few years. Notwithstanding the difficulties to be overcome in conducting many operations simultaneously, the methods of that officer are so perfected as to be well-nigh infallible. A few cases will show how the experience was acquired, and how the work is accomplished. Similar detections are taking place in other cities also, but New York is the great metropolis of rascality as well as of commerce.

THROUGH THE TILES.

A very indignant sufferer was Rev. Theophilus Boanerges, D. D., managing editor of a leading religious newspaper. In the columns of the "Behemoth" he thundered against the iniquities of the post-office establishment, and groaned in spirit over the multiplying evidences of modern corruption and degeneracy. Patrons were warned not to intrust remittances for

subscriptions or advertisements to the mails. The doctor also called upon Mr. Sharretts, and though his strictures were severe and obviously unreasonable, he was treated with the consideration due to the cloth, and assured that no effort should be spared to bring the offender to justice.

It soon appeared that in the employment of the newspaper was a lad about sixteen years of age,— a marked favorite of the doctor,— whose multifarious duties embraced the carriage of the mails to and from the post-office. As the losses in that locality were confined to the correspondence of the "Behemoth," the special agent began to observe closely the movements of the messenger, and soon became convinced that he was following the right trail. Desiring the co-operation of the complainant, he called at the editorial rooms to expound his theory, and lay out a plan of operations. "Sir," said the indignant divine, interrupting the story, "you are wholly wrong. The boy is honest, and commands my entire confidence. The trouble is in your post-office. There you must look to find it. To hunt here is an idle waste of time."

"I beg leave to differ," remonstrated the officer. "I have examined the facts bearing on the case, and can come to but one conclusion. I think I can make the matter clear to your mind also."

"Impossible!" interrupted the doctor. "There are but two keys to the box. I keep one myself, and the other is in the possession of the postal clerk who handles our letters. The boy could not steal them if he desired."

Seeing that no voluntary aid was to be expected from the editor, the special agent withdrew, but by means of other assistance learned the routine of the office.

The mail for the paper was delivered to the boy in a locked box. This he took to the editorial room — a cosy apartment, located over a bank — and deposited on the table unviolated, so far as could be seen by such cursory observation as the internal arrangement of the building would permit. Light was admitted from above through a ceiling formed of glass tiles, each about two feet square.

As the divine invariably opened the mail in person, and would not listen to any plan of procedure that implied the dishonesty of the messenger, it became necessary to secure his co-operation by stratagem. Again the special agent sought the editorial sanctum, remarking, with an air suggestive of an important but somewhat unpleasant discovery, "Good morning, doctor. On looking the field over more carefully, I must admit that your views may, after all, be right."

"Didn't I tell you so at the outset?" rejoined the thunderer, triumphantly and cordially, as if his opinion of the acumen of the officer had improved manyfold since the last interview.

"Yes, doctor, you did. I surrender unconditionally. I am after the clerk who makes up the box for your boy Harry. Now, I want you to make lists of the letters received by each mail, and to send them quietly to my office. On comparing these with other lists taken before the letters are delivered into the hands of the clerk, any discrepancies will immediately appear. But don't say anything to Harry. Boys are boys, and the secret might leak out — perhaps reach the ear of the suspected clerk."

"Trust that to me," replied the editor. "I will follow your instructions fully."

On receipt of the third list, a number of letters were found to be missing. As they had been traced directly into the custody of Harry the errand-boy, the last doubt was now removed respecting the identity of the thief, he alone being in a position to intercept the missives before they reached the hands of the reverend gentleman himself.

At the request of the special agent, the bank authorities caused one of the glass tiles over the editorial table to be slightly raised in the night; and the next morning, accompanied by a policeman in plain clothes, he brought his eye to the aperture to observe what might happen below. A number of letters of seductive aspect, specially prepared for the occasion, had been placed in the box in addition to the regular mail.

The watchman did not have long to tarry. Approaching footsteps were heard, and the *fidus Achates* of the trustful proprietor entered the room, whistling for company. The door was carefully closed, and the box deposited on a table, or desk, in full view of the outlook above. The movements of the youth, though a little nervous, showed no lack of confidence.

"A cautious look around he stole,
His bags of chink he chunk;
And many a wicked smile he smole,
And many a wink he wunk."

Suddenly the "music" ceased, and the lad struck an attitude of attention. Not a sound broke the deep silence save the subdued rumble of wheels in the street. In an instant the statuesque figure seemed to become unjointed, each limb and muscle having an independent life. The dexter hand came down upon the epigastrium with a gesture suggestive of inward pain. The left hand quickly followed, as if the paroxysm was increasing. Then a jolly whistle escaped involuntarily. Boys don't whistle in that way when suffering from severe in-



The Youthful Protege.

ternal disorders. By this time it was quite evident that something of mysterious importance lay concealed beneath the tight-fitting bands of his garments. Could it be a package of letters? Speculation was soon set at rest. A vigorous tug brought up from the fob in the outgrown pants a large silver watch. The possessor gazed lovingly upon the treasure, and placing it over his right ear, listened in rapt delight to the music of the tick. After petting the watch a few seconds, the lad restored it to its hiding-place.

Obviously the ownership of the article was a profound secret, carefully guarded. Hence, in all probability, it had been purchased surreptitiously with stolen funds.

After the close of the first act in the drama, the boy listened again for a minute, and then walking to the desk, opened a drawer and took out a key with which the box was quickly unlocked. Running through the contents, he abstracted several letters, and placed them in a side-pocket. The box was then relocked, and the key restored to the proper drawer—the only key in the office—the key in the exclusive possession of the thunderer, who had hurled so many flaming bolts into the encampments of the post-office department.

Hurrying down from the post of observation, the agent with his assistant sought the editor to compare lists, and of course found several letters to be missing. "You have caught that rascally post-office clerk this time, and I shall insist that he receive the full penalty of the law, both as a punishment and as a warning," remarked the doctor, gleefully, well pleased at the complete vindication of his own judgment.

"Just so," replied the officer. "Now, let Harry go along with me to identify the clerk from whom he received the box. We must guard every point, and suffer no slips to occur."

The youthful protégé was accordingly directed to accompany the special agent, and was favored by his employer with various wise and solemn instructions in reference to the part he was to play. Without manifesting the least suspicion or reluctance, the boy started; but when about half the distance to

the post-office had been accomplished, a new light seemed to break upon him. Surmising that all was not well with him, too late he tried to unload by dropping the proofs of guilt in a wayside ash-box. The little manœuvre failed lamentably. Boy and booty were taken on together.

On reaching the office of the special agent, the thief, after brief resistance, confessed, and wrote out a full statement of his long-continued peculations. Doctor Boanerges was then sent for. When informed of the issue of the investigation, he was struck dumb with amazement and chagrin,—amazement at the defection of the trusted messenger, chagrin at the terrible collapse of his favorite theory. Perhaps the specters of bloody editorials rose from the grave to shake their gory locks at him. It is hard for a man of autocratic habits of mind to admit that he has erred, and erred grievously. This, however, the good doctor did, and since that day he has been a firm believer in the general integrity of postal employés, and especially in the superior judgment of its agents.

The jurisdiction of the department ceases with the delivery of letters to the owner, or his accredited agent; hence the penalties for embezzlement do not reach cases of this kind. The offense becomes larceny, cognizable only in the state courts. Accordingly the youth was turned over to the tender mercies of his employer, who, on tearful promises of amendment, finally forgave the culprit. Happily the clemency was not misplaced. From that day the character of the boy was radically changed, and to the world he is now known as a useful and respected man.

THE SCION OF A WEALTHY HOUSE.

Some time after the incidents narrated above, a courteous gentleman of mature years dropped into the office of Mr. Sharretts, and produced a long catalogue of grievances. He was a partner in one of the largest and most reputable publishing-houses in the city. The business ramifications of the establishment reached all parts of the country, and extended

to foreign nations also. As a consequence, its correspondence was very heavy, including many cash orders of from one to five or six dollars each, for the different works issued from its presses. For several months the mails of the firm had been systematically plundered, till the evil had now become unbearable. Not only were they suffering heavy pecuniary losses, but in reputation also. Customers in the country, whose confidence in the mails had never been shaken by untoward experiences, were in many cases writing bitter words of complaint, laying all the blame upon the house. It was bad enough to lose the money, but more aggravating by far to be held accountable for the misdeeds of others, especially where redress seemed to be impracticable. From the wide distribution of the complaints, the gentleman argued that the trouble must be in the New York office, and urged that immediate steps be taken for the detection of the criminal.

The special agent entered at once on the investigation. Here, as before, the facts all pointed to the messenger of the firm, while the antecedents and circumstances of the youth seemed with equal emphasis to contradict the evidence. He was the scion of a wealthy family, whose services were rewarded with no pecuniary recompense, instruction in the mysteries of the business being accepted in lieu of more material compensation. The habits of the lad were observed at first casually, and then critically. Receiving the mails at the delivery window, he went directly home, losing no time by the way. A count of the letters was kept at each end of the line, and daily comparisons revealed no disagreement in the lists.

Still large numbers of the missives were rifled, the moneys referred to in the text having parted company with the other contents. On close inspection, many of the envelopes showed signs of foul play, though the work of opening and regumming was performed with rare neatness and dexterity. Where and how was the mischief done?

Inside of the post-office the closest surveillance was kept,

and the most searching experiments tried, to test the honesty of the delivery clerks, without developing a single suspicious circumstance.

Meanwhile, a thief was picked up in another part of the office, and on his person were found several letters addressed to the firm in question. Was it possible that this fellow had contrived systematically to slip up to tables where he had no business, and perpetrate the robberies? The theory did not account satisfactorily for all the facts of the case, but in the heat of the moment was accepted in lieu of a better. The firm was promptly notified, and mutual congratulations were exchanged.

The illusion, however, was of short continuance, for the rifling went on without interruption. So torturesome had the mystery become, that the officer resolved to subordinate other equally important work to this, till he discovered the ingenious and daring thief. Great care was required, for the game must be caught, not scared. He inspected minutely the envelopes before they went into the hands of the messenger, and again after their delivery into the counting-room of the firm, and it was plain, from faint traces of mutilation, that unholy fingers had been busy in the interval. Yet the youth did not loiter on the way, and uniformly turned in the exact number that he received. The manipulation of the envelopes, after passing from the custody of the post-office authorities, narrowed the robberies down to the messenger, while the promptitude and exactness with which his duties in the matter were apparently discharged, not less than the abundant resources at his command, seemed to lift him above suspicion. Having learned, however, that many letters were subjected to some occult but unlawful process on the passage from the post-office to the publishing-house, the special agent directed his wits to the discovery of the trick.

In company with the officer who assisted in "looking through the tiles," he took a position in the corridor, outside of the delivery window, to watch the movements of the mes-

senger. Soon the young gentleman, dressed in the height of fashion, with a rather marked but withal well-bred style, passed through the lobby and received his mail. Looking neither to the right nor to the left, he walked at a reasonable gait, up Liberty Street toward Broadway. On turning the corner, he was joined by a young gentleman more fashionably attired, if possible, than himself. They appeared to be intimate friends.

It now flashed across the mind of the agent that he had seen the two join each other several times before, and with renewed interest he closely dogged their steps. After proceeding a short distance, they hailed and entered an empty omnibus. So crowded was the thoroughfare that pedestrians easily kept up with the vehicles. After walking half a block further to divert suspicion, the special agent entered the same conveyance, leaving his companion to follow close behind on the sidewalk. For a moment or two the young men talked on indifferent subjects; but observing that the stranger, the only other occupant of the coach, was buried in meditation, and paid no attention to their proceedings, hurried on to business. Plunging his hand into the well-filled pouch, the "scion of a wealthy family" drew out a large number of letters, and, counting them, turned the package over to his companion, who by way of exchange took from the recesses of his overcoat a large lot, and, counting off an equal number, dropped them into the bag to restore the equilibrium.

Shortly after, the custodian of the stolen property alighted, and was soon lost to sight in the throng. The messenger stopped when opposite the publishing-house, and with customary promptitude delivered the mail to one of the partners. The agent followed closely enough to keep every movement in view. Taking the gentleman aside, he explained the nature of his discovery, when the intelligence was received with mingled astonishment and incredulity. Unable to see any motive for the robberies, the partner could hardly believe at first the statement of the officer. The accused had been reared

in the lap of luxury. At home no want of this petted child of fortune had been allowed to go ungratified. With super-abundant means at command, how could he stoop to the baseness of plundering his employers?

At the suggestion of the officer, the quarter-deck was temporarily cleared, and the "scion" sent for. Emboldened, perhaps, by the knowledge that no evidences of guilt could be found on his person, he at first denied the charge; but when



"Plunging his hand into the well-filled pouch, the 'scion of a wealthy family' drew out a large number of letters."

confronted with the proofs, admitted the crime. He also gave the name and location of his confederate, for whom an officer was immediately dispatched. On the arrival of the youth, mutual recriminations were followed by a full confession. Forty-two letters belonging to the firm were found in their possession.

The method pursued is sufficiently explained by the scene

in the omnibus. Whenever a lot was abstracted, the same number that had already gone through the rifling process was restored. Hence the system of counting and comparison failed to reach the case. The partner who conducted the investigation at one end of the line had never observed that many of the letters must have been delayed.

After the main facts had been developed, the group began to discuss the probable extent of the peculations. "My old man," remarked the imperturbable "scion," with an air of indifference, "will make good all losses—put in everything. He will give a check for the full amount."

This was afterwards done, so that the firm sustained no direct pecuniary loss, though the annoyance and indirect losses are hardly to be measured by a monetary standard.

They are not initiating any more wealthy young men into the mysteries of the business.

By Hook or by Crook.

Early one morning, Mr. White, a prominent merchant, dropped into the office of Mr. Sharretts to enter complaint against a mail-carrier. There could be no doubt about the identity of the person who was troubling his peace. His correspondence was large, and was now made up to a considerable extent of letters from indignant customers, who complained that their orders and remittances were suffered to go unacknowledged. Some time before, with a view to greater convenience and security, he had adopted the carrier system, and had provided a strong receptacle near the center of the store, wherein the carrier was directed to deposit all letters for himself and his clerks. There was but one key to the box, which he carried in person, opening it and distributing the contents at his convenience. Despite these precautions, he was continually losing letters, or receiving them with the valuable inclosures abstracted.

Having received several fresh complaints from other parties in the same locality, the special agent admitted that there was

sufficient ground for suspecting the carrier who served the route. He began at once a series of extended and exhaustive experiments, and though scores of enticing missives passed through the hands of the suspected party, each one was delivered with disappointing regularity. During the progress of the investigation, the box was uniformly examined immediately after the departure of the carrier, and as the losses abruptly ceased, Mr. White concluded that the thief had been in some way apprised of the surveillance, and hence had abandoned, temporarily, his evil practices. Accordingly, detective operations were suspended, and matters permitted to relapse into their old groove.

Within a week the stealing broke out again, with renewed virulence. Mr. White revisited the office of the special agent in a state of high excitement, and exhibited a number of letters that had been rifled of their contents, the envelopes betraying obvious signs of mutilation. One had been badly torn in opening, and to conceal the rent, the flap was made to fold considerably lower than at the original sealing, so that the segments of the receiving post-mark of the station, imprinted on the reverse side, no longer matched. This showed that the letter had been violated after the stamp was placed upon it. The officer felt certain that no one as intelligent as the carrier on that route, if guilty of the robbery, would ever deliver a missive so bunglingly maltreated. It would have been destroyed, as many others had been. He inferred at once that some employé in the store was doing the mischief, though it was difficult to surmise how.

The establishment of Mr. White, on Broadway, occupied nearly half the block. Wide counters lined the sides. Not far from the center stood the receptacle for letters,—a strong box, with a narrow aperture on top, through which it was impossible even for a young child to introduce the hand. The proprietor reposed implicit confidence in the clerks and porters, believing that neither one would perpetrate the thefts, even if the opportunity was granted. The trouble could not

be in his establishment, for even if the fold harbored a black sheep, there was no way in which he could break through the inclosure to steal.

Before the adoption of the carrier system, a youth of about eighteen had acted as mail messenger. By comparing various items of information, the officer learned that the losses began soon after the lad was taken into the store. Demure, circumspect, and always ready to oblige, he was pronounced by his employer to be as "true as the sun."

More from the coincidence referred to than from the actions or appearance of the young fellow, the agent decided to place both him and the unfortunate receptacle under close surveillance. An outlook was extemporized by cutting an aperture through a door opening from one side of the store into an unused passage, and it was arranged that the officer and a faithful satellite should watch each day during the intervals between the receipt of the mail and its removal by the proprietor. The experiment was soon rewarded with success. It was the third trial. The carrier had deposited the letters as usual, and hurried on. The store was crowded with customers, the salesmen busy, and all preoccupied. No one inside paid any attention to the letter-box. Ere long the late messenger advanced from the back of the store, and sidled toward it, apparently unnoticed by the clerks and porters. For a moment the lad was busy with the box, but the partial interposition of his person prevented the watchers on the outside from seeing exactly what he did. The corners of envelopes, however, were observed on the quick passage from the aperture to the pocket of the operator.

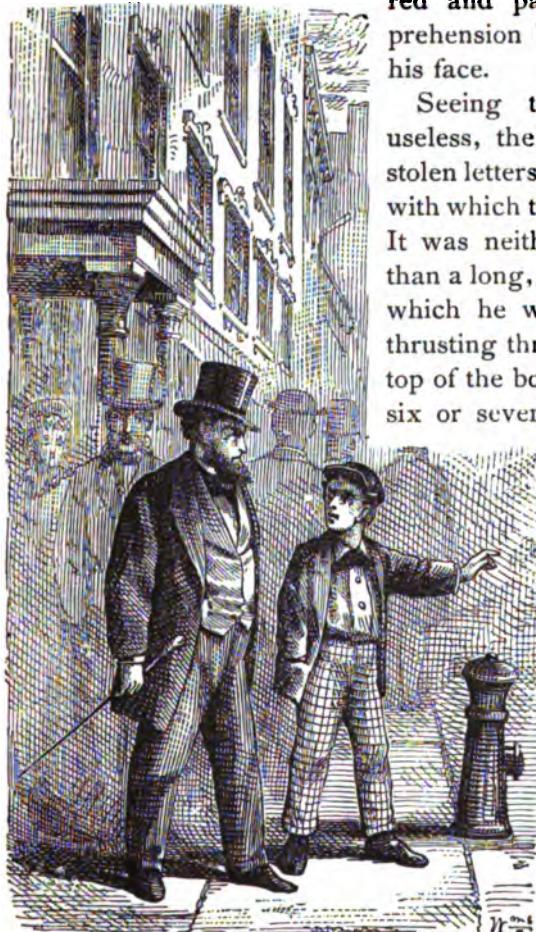
A few seconds later the proprietor entered the counting-room, followed by the officer. "Here," said Mr. White, beckoning to the bad boy, "show this gentleman where the post-office is."

"All right," replied he, picking up his hat with alacrity, and leaving the store in company with the stranger. Entirely unsuspicuous of the object of the expedition, he pointed out

various places of interest on the way, and otherwise endeavored to render himself agreeable. Not till he entered the room of the special agent, and the door closed heavily behind, did the red and pale shadows of apprehension begin to play across his face.

Seeing that resistance was useless, the thief produced the stolen letters, and the instrument with which they were abstracted. It was neither more nor less than a long, crooked, wire hook, which he was in the habit of thrusting through the slit in the top of the box, drawing up often six or seven letters at a time.

The young robber wrote out a statement of his thefts, showing when they commenced, and what they amounted to. In attempting to explain his defection, he told the same old story, which officers in large cities are called upon to hear so often. A salary of three and a half dollars a



"Entirely unsuspecting of the object of the expedition, he pointed out various places of interest on the way."

week proved insufficient to meet the acknowledged demands of billiard-rooms, theatres, and other places of amusement. Fast company and expensive habits had led by swift stages

to crime, exposure, and what seemed at the moment overwhelming and irretrievable disgrace.

Mr. White was sent for, and to his tender mercies the sobbing thief was committed. That gentleman was greatly mortified to find the marauder in his own employ instead of the post-office, as he had stoutly maintained; but his chagrin was relieved by the satisfaction of having the source of the long-continued injury to his business and reputation successfully unearthed.

DELIVERED FROM EVIL.

Criminals, as a rule, are not overstocked with gratitude. Perhaps leniency more frequently encourages fresh violations of law than opens a way to reform. Hence it is doubly agreeable to record instances where clemency has been received in a spirit of thankfulness, and has proved instrumental in winning the erring back to rectitude.

A lawyer, in the city of New York, enjoying a large and lucrative practice, became suddenly aware that a danger, not enumerated among the probable casualties of professional life, menaced his business. The correspondence of the office fell into perplexing entanglements. In nearly every mail aggrieved clients referred, in reproachful terms, to previous letters and remittances that had received no acknowledgment.

Engrossed in legal work before the various tribunals of the metropolis, some time elapsed before the lawyer began to look seriously into the routine business of his own office, managed hitherto entirely by subordinates. Ere long, however, the upbraidings of the sufferers poured in in such numbers that he was forced into active measures for the suppression of the evil. Never doubting for a moment that the depredator was lurking somewhere within the ample confines of the post-office, he called on the postmaster to explain his tribulations, and was by that official referred to the special agent.

Stepping through the doorway of Mr. Sharrett's room, he inquired, with a lowering brow, and in a rather peremptory tone, "Are you the post-office detective?"

Agent. "I presume I am the person you inquire for."

Lawyer. "Some scoundrel in this post-office is stealing my letters. It is terrible. Complaints come in by the score. I wish you people to understand that unless the evil is suppressed instantly, I am determined to pursue the matter to the bitter end. I shall not be very particular, either, in regard to whom I may hit or hurt."

Agent. "I am sorry to hear you are having trouble with the mails. I assure you I will do everything in my power to detect the guilty party. Are you satisfied that no one in your own office is doing the mischief?"

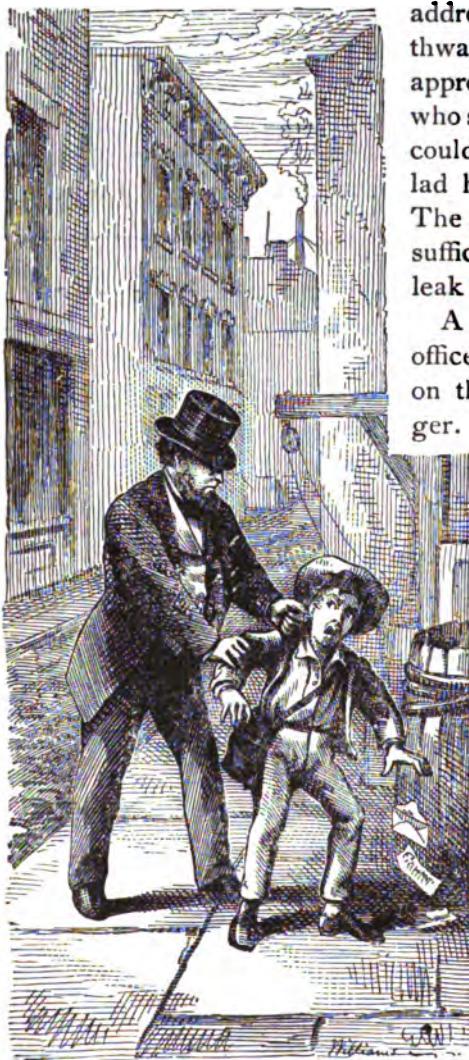
Lawyer. "Stop right there, if you please. Do not try to evade or shift the responsibility. Assuredly I should not be fool enough to bring hither grievances belonging to my own establishment. No, sir. The trouble is right here in this building, and I know it."

Agent. "Very well. If it is here, I will find it. All I ask is your co-operation if I need it."

Lawyer. "Certainly, sir. If I can be of any service, do not hesitate to call on me."

Having, in answer to the questions of the officer, imparted such information as he possessed, the lawyer departed with a serene bow, fully satisfied that, if the detective was sharp, another post-office clerk would soon gaze upon the sky through grated bars.

The special agent, however, did not accept the theory of the complainant, though too well taught by experience to betray the doubt. It happened that a few days prior to the call of the legal luminary, whose presence had for a few moments irradiated his humble sanctum, while standing in the lobby of the post-office, nearly opposite to the box of the gentleman, though not aware at the time to whom it belonged, his attention was attracted to a diminutive, cadaverous, hungry-eyed boy, who, on withdrawing the letters, scrutinized and felt of each one very carefully before depositing it in the bag. The officer moved in that direction with the view of discovering the



"Apprehended in the very act."

poor starveling, sobbing as if the day of doom had come, told his story, and a sad story it was. He admitted the long series of thefts, and acknowledged that he appreciated the enormity of the crime, but in broken accents pleaded for mercy. "O,

addresses, but the purpose was thwarted by the inopportune approach of an acquaintance, who seized him by the coat, and could not be shaken off till the lad had turned to walk away. The circumstance, however, sufficed to indicate where the leak was likely to be found.

A few mornings later, the officer stood near the same box on the arrival of the messenger. Among the letters of the lawyer was one very enticing epistle that could hardly fail to attract the favorable consideration of an habitual thief. The boy was seen to select this particular missive for deposit in a side coat-pocket, instead of the proper receptacle. Leaving the building, he turned into a side street, closely followed by the officer, and was apprehended in the very act of abstracting the contents.

When taken to the room of the special agent, the

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sir," said he, "if you knew my circumstances, you would pity me. I have no father. I am between fourteen and fifteen, the oldest boy in the family, and the only one that has work. I have three brothers, one four years old, one seven, and one twelve; and four sisters, but they can get nothing to do. My eldest sister is sick, and we can get no medicine for her. It makes my heart ache to see the sufferings of my poor mother and of the children. Grandmother lives with us, too. Sometimes they have nothing but a soda cracker to eat all day. Mother tries to get bread for me, as I work; but when I see how the poor little ones look while I am eating, though they don't say a word, I divide my crust with them, for I can't see them starve. I only get three dollars a week. The money I stole I gave to mother, making her believe I received extra pay for overwork. O, sir, if I can only be forgiven this time, I never will be dishonest again."

There was no evasion, concealment, or duplicity in the countenance or manner of the lad. Sunken features and shriveled limbs bore silent but pathetic witness to the reality of slow starvation. He had sinned, it is true, and sinned knowingly, but the crimes were begun and kept up to win bread for the famishing.

"I am truly sorry for you," resumed the officer, sympathetically, "but I do not see how you can be saved from the fatal consequences of your own misdeeds."

"What will mother say when she learns that I'm a thief!" ejaculated the boy, bursting again into tears. "It will kill her—I know it will."

"You should have thought of that before," suggested the special agent, more in the spirit of pity than of reproof.

"She has always tried to teach me to do right, and I have turned out to be a thief," sobbed the child. "My poor mother, my poor mother!"

The employer was sent for. At first he manifested a great deal of ill-temper toward the poor child, but on hearing the whole story, his harshness dissolved into pity. At the earnest

solicitation of the special agent, reinforced, probably, by painful twinges of conscience for paying such a miserable stipend for services that began early and ended late, the lawyer took back the little fellow at an increased compensation.

The special agent sought out the distressed family, plunging his hand deeply into his pocket to relieve their wants. Others, too, were brought to take an interest in their welfare.

The boy kept his promise to the letter, and has since won several well-earned promotions.

A N APPLICANT FOR REAPPOINTMENT.



ABEL RIDLEY.

mysterious usurper, who persistently refused to recognize the just claims of the complainant.

A special agent was directed to proceed thither to learn the facts and take such action as the merits of the case might require. On reaching Oldbury he found that the let-

YEAR or two after the close of the late war, the first assistant postmaster-general received a singular letter, covering four pages of foolscap, from Oldbury, South Carolina. Through much painful chirography and bad spelling, the writer, one Abel Ridley, complained that, though rightful postmaster, he was kept out of possession of the office by violence and fraud. Many months before, according to the allegations, he had received the appointment, made the bond, and been duly commissioned, but during all this long period had been cruelly deprived of his rights by some

ter contained a little truth, mixed with a good deal of falsehood.

For a number of years after the war, great difficulty was experienced in filling the smaller offices at the south, as incumbents were required to take the "iron-clad oath," which few were able or willing to do. Among the devices for evading the law the most common was a dual arrangement whereby one party did the swearing and appeared on the record, while the other performed the work and drew the pay. Unmarried women or old men generally served as the figure-heads.

Oldbury was a thriving village, and on the return of peace the community were in haste to secure a restoration of former mail facilities. They desired that the gentleman who had acceptably filled the position of postmaster for fifteen years should continue to serve in the same capacity; but he could not take the prescribed oath, having held office under the confederacy. In looking about for a man of straw to do the swearing, they hit upon Ridley, a comparative stranger, who, at the suggestion of the proposed beneficiary of the arrangement, swallowed the iron-clad, and relapsed into obscurity. The old postmaster ran on in the old groove, evidently believing that he held the place by prescriptive right and by a life-tenure. Meanwhile the humble mercantile ventures of Ridley turned out so badly that he found himself pushed to the wall. While his fortunes had been going down, the salary of the postmaster had been going up, till it now amounted to about eight hundred dollars a year. The temptation was too great. Ridley, who had no weight in the community, and whose connection with the office was purely nominal, determined, if possible, to make its emoluments his own. Without friends or influence, how was he to accomplish this? Hardly thinking his words would ever return to confront him, he wrote to the department the letter referred to at the outset.

On bringing the rival claimants together, the special agent learned that Ridley had never demanded the office from the actual incumbent, or even intimated that he would like it. In

fact, not a word had ever passed between them on the subject, the tale of dispossession by fraud and violence, with its various embellishments, being a pure fabrication. Both were equally surprised at the turn of affairs—Ridley at the exposure of his duplicity, and the unconscious assistant that his tenure should be covertly assailed by one who had been brought into the affair as a matter of convenience, and whose connection with the arrangement was almost forgotten.

Though it was a great trial to be compelled to interpose in behalf of a liar and a sneak, no alternative was offered but to place Ridley, who held the commission, in possession of the office. In his case a bad beginning missed widely of making a good ending.

In the summer of 1870, a banker of Augusta, Georgia, accosting on the street the special agent already mentioned, informed him that a certain pawnbroker was offering about the city, at a



The Pawnbroker.

discount of five per cent., a lot of postage stamps worth on their face one hundred and fifty dollars. Some postmaster was obviously perpetrating a fraud on the government, and the first point in the investigation was to locate the swindle.

The records of the post-office at Augusta showed that for several months the pawnbroker had been sending registered letters to Ridley, the postmaster at Oldbury, South Carolina, with whom the reader already enjoys a slight acquaintance. As a faithless employé of the department would not be likely to use the mails for the transmission of contraband wares, the special agent went to the headquarters of the Southern Express Company to inquire whether any packages had been transmitted through their hands between the suspected party and the pawnbroker. Although the rules of this company require the business of its patrons to be treated as strictly confidential, the general and division superintendents uniformly co-operate with the post-office department in its efforts to detect fraud. Agents of the government are indebted to them for much valuable assistance, which, the writer is happy to testify, has within the range of his observation uniformly been rendered with zeal and courtesy.

In this case, the books of the company happily supplemented the information furnished at the post-office. Ridley had sent to the pawnbroker several valuable packages by express, and the proceeds less the discounts had obviously been returned in registered letters.

Readers unacquainted with post-office details will naturally inquire how Ridley, after supplying stamps to his own neighborhood, could accumulate a stock to be peddled elsewhere. Had he been honest there would have been no surplus. Under the law as it then existed, the salaries of postmasters in offices like Oldbury depended mainly on the number of stamps canceled, which every two years were counted for three or six consecutive months, and reported to the department under oath. By swearing to false returns he had succeeded in a brief period in running his salary up from eight hundred to

fifteen hundred dollars. Instead of ordering stamps from the department on the basis of the actual needs of the office, his requisitions were swollen to treble the proper amount for the purpose of hiding the fraud. The surplus he expected to dispose of in other places through the agency of disreputable characters like himself. Except for the information furnished by the banker, the crime might have passed undetected, as the head of the stamp division in Washington, if, in the multiplicity of work, his attention had been called to the rapid growth of the business at Oldbury, might naturally have inferred that the village was highly prosperous, rather than that the postmaster was a knave.

It is generally safe to assume that a man who will lie and commit perjury, will also steal whenever he thinks he has a safe chance. Recent discoveries turned a bright light upon the ill-omened visage of Ridley as he writhed a couple of years before under the exposure of the falsehoods contained in his first letter to the department. Mere dismissal seemed to be an entirely inadequate punishment for his repeated offenses, and yet if the postmaster-general took immediate action he could do no more than turn him out. Simple lying is not a crime on the statute books, and the fact of perjury, however indisputable in reality, could not be established by legal proof in a court of justice.

In looking over the reports of mail depredations in South Carolina, the special agent found but two losses that could possibly be charged to the office at Oldbury, and each of these might have occurred elsewhere. One, being a little peculiar, suggested a device which proved entirely successful.

A registered letter mailed originally at Pendleton, South Carolina, to Ninety-Six, remained in the office uncalled for, the party addressed — an itinerant — having gone elsewhere in his round of travel. He subsequently wrote to Ninety-Six, requesting that the letter be forwarded to Oldbury. Instead of inclosing it as he ought in a registered package-envelope, wherein its course could be traced by an unbroken chain of

receipts, the postmaster dispatched it as an ordinary letter in the regular mail. Although the distance was short, it never reached the owner. The stamp business raised a strong presumption that the letter was stolen by Ridley.

An experienced agent aims to bait a thief in the line of his habitual operations, and the hint suggested by this loss was accordingly acted upon.

At this time the special agent was compelled to make a flying trip to Mississippi, and while there prepared a number of decoys, with suitable postmarks, for the express benefit of Abel Ridley. Armed with these, he proceeded to Columbia as a base of operations, prepared to prosecute the chase till the thief was caught, or till his innocence of actual robbery was demonstrated.

The first decoy consisted of two registered letters, one postmarked with the office stamp of Canton, Mississippi, and the other postmarked Calhoun, Mississippi. Judging from the exterior of this missive, the postmaster at Calhoun had never read the regulations with much care, for, in addition to barbarous chirography, mistakes had been committed wherever mistakes were possible.

The letter from Canton was directed to William Ross, Oldbury, South Carolina, and the other to John Converse, Oak Hill, Mississippi. Both were inclosed in a registered package-envelope, duly postmarked at Canton. No way-bill or other explanatory paper accompanied the letter for Converse. It seemed, to all appearance, to have been dropped into the package-envelope inadvertently by the postmaster at Canton, and having gone so widely astray, the presumptions were strong that every trace of it must be lost. Notwithstanding its unprepossessing aspect, however, it contained twenty-two dollars, temptingly folded.

The package inclosing the two letters was made up in the presence of the assistant postmaster at Columbia, and sealed with wax. Having been duly directed to the postmaster at Oldbury, it was ready to start on its mission.

The following day the detective accompanied the route agent over the road, and saw the package delivered to the mail messenger at Oldbury. It was the duty of the postmaster, on finding that one of the inclosures had miscarried, to register it at once to the office of destination.

The return mail passed four hours later, and though the contents of the pouch were carefully examined, the missing letter failed to appear. The watch was kept up the second and third



"The conductor kindly stopped to let the special agent off."

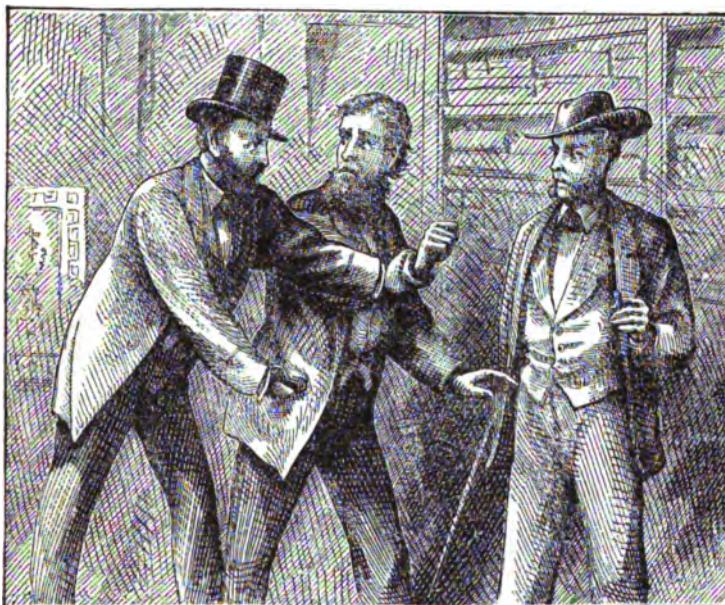
day with similar results. Had Mr. John Converse been a veritable personage of average sensibilities, he would have grown uneasy about the safety of his twenty-two dollars even as the case stood then. On the third day, after the train had passed some distance beyond the village, the conductor kindly stopped to let the special agent off.

The most exciting part of the game had now been reached. It is always the desire of a conscientious agent to vindicate a

suspected party if innocent, and to entrap him beyond the possibility of doubt or cavil if guilty. Failure to secure evidence requisite to convince the minds of a jury may give the post-office marauder further license to continue his depredations upon society. Yet this evidence consists of a few bills which may still remain undisturbed in the letter as it reached the office, or may have been spent, and thus have disappeared beyond recovery. To insure success in springing the trap, one has to avoid equally procrastination and precipitancy, and the unknown conditions of each case are too numerous to permit one to decide when to strike with any very strong assurance that he is not committing a mistake. After weighing the probabilities, and adopting the course which seems on the whole to be best, the expert in detecting crime comes to be more and more upheld by the faith that the devil has a scurvy trick of deserting a thief in the supreme crisis of his need. Fate seems often to contribute more than wit to the success of the final catastrophe.

The officer first sought a reputable citizen who consented to accompany him in the capacity of witness. Ridley did not appear particularly well pleased to receive a visit from an agent of the government, but an examination of irrelevant matters soon put him comparatively at ease. As the course of inquiry turned, however, to the registry business, and gradually narrowed down toward the letter from Calhoun, Mississippi, his agitation visibly returned. When questioned about the contents of the package, he acknowledged that it held two letters, and produced the one for William Ross, but after a cursory search pretended he could not find its comrade directed to our friend John Converse. When assured with unmistakable emphasis that it must be produced, he suddenly remembered that he had taken it to his house, several blocks distant, and with much alacrity volunteered to go for it. With equal readiness the special agent offered to keep him company. He then went to a desk nailed to one end of the store, and after turning over the contents, stealthily slipped something into a side pocket.

Notwithstanding the partial interposition of his person and the quickness of his movements, the officer caught a glimpse of two ten-dollar bills. As the fellow emerged from behind the counter he was stopped in the middle of the floor, where there was no chance for further tricks or concealments, and asked to unload. Perhaps he was slightly assisted in the process. Out of a side pocket of his coat, along with other less interesting matter, was drawn the letter for John Converse, broken open,



"As the fellow emerged from behind the counter he was stopped in the middle of the floor, where there was no chance for further tricks."

and minus twenty dollars. The two dollars were left. As the postmaster claimed to be a pious man, he was possibly too conscientious to steal the whole. In his hand, as it came from the desk, were two ten-dollar notes, which he asserted were the identical notes he had taken from the letter.

Ridley was immediately taken before the trial-justice of the place for a preliminary hearing. By a memorandum describ-

ing the money in the decoy, the two dollars were now identified. The tens had been spent, the substitutes produced by the postmaster lacking the numbers and other marks of the originals. By way of explanation he said that, being hard pressed for funds, and finding a registered letter a good deal out of its course, he had temporarily borrowed twenty dollars, expecting to replace the money from his first spare change. He argued to himself that Mr. Converse would not be greatly inconvenienced by the additional delay. The justice, however, took a different view of the transaction, and committed him for trial at the next term of the United States court. Ridley made pathetic appeals to a number of neighbors to sign a bond for his appearance, but as no one could be prevailed upon to take the risk, he was marched off to jail to await, in safe quarters, the meeting of the court.

The conduct of the office now devolved upon the sureties, whom the special agent assisted in taking an account of stock. In rummaging the mysterious desk already referred to, one of them drew forth a volume carefully enveloped in a multiplicity of wrappings. It might be an heirloom, or keepsake from the dewy innocence of youth. A suggestion of former happiness amid misery, or of lost innocence in crime, always touches the sensibilities. The finder was visibly moved. His thoughts evidently reverted from the dreary fate of Abel Ridley to the early days when sacred teachings were prized, and, without a word spoken, the discovery, by the painful contrast it suggested to the mind, seemed to impress the little group with a keener appreciation of the moral ruin of a man who had started in life, perhaps, with a good outfit for an honorable career. Their feelings, however, experienced the most painful revulsion when the real character of the book became known. It was a grossly obscene affair, an emanation from the kingdom of Satan, a pool of pollution, which no right-minded person could glance over without feelings of unutterable disgust. Its discovery among the treasured effects of the criminal gave another illustration of the fearful tie that binds all vices in a

kindred plexus. Falsehood, perjury, thieving, and obscenity flourish on one stem, and grow rank together.

By the time the trial came on in the United States court, at Columbia, Ridley had concocted a story to explain the abstraction of the money, which he expected would take him safely through. In South Carolina, at that time, defendants in criminal prosecutions, in derogation of the common-law practice, were permitted to testify in their own behalf. His own testimony was supplemented by that of his son, a lad of perhaps eighteen summers, but much older in the experience picked up among bad companions, and in improper resorts, than in years. Falsehood, however well guarded, makes, as the sequel will show, a very unsafe defense. The moment one abandons the bed-rock of integrity and truth, he is liable at any turn to trip irretrievably, for a lie is only a snare to catch a fool.

The youth first took the stand. He swore that he was in the office at Oldbury alone when the registered package arrived. On cutting the end he found two letters bearing the addresses previously described. The envelope of the one directed to John Converse came broken open, as exhibited to the jury, so that the contents were exposed. At this juncture a large number of money-orders were brought in for payment, and the cash-box did not hold funds enough to meet the drain. In the dilemma, without the knowledge of the postmaster, the young man "borrowed" twenty dollars from the letter of "John



"The youth first took the stand."

Converse" to aid in tiding over the crisis, intending to replace the amount and forward the same to its destination as soon as the finances of the office were sufficiently recruited to permit. He gave quite a pathetic account of the lecture, partly of reproof and partly of admonition, administered by his careful and conscientious parent when this device for "raising the wind" was first communicated to him.

Ridley corroborated the story of the boy, and though the skillful cross-questioning of the district attorney led him into numerous contradictions and entanglements, forcing him often to wince fearfully under the fire, he stepped at length from the witness-stand under the apparent belief that his chances were good for breaking through the damning array of facts as well as the meshes of the law.

Incidents seemingly trivial, frequently determine the fate of a case. While no degree of prescience can foresee what sort of a lie a thief on trial will contrive to mislead the minds of a jury, or prepare in advance the evidence to rebut it, a mistake or act of forgetfulness may be the means of exploding the falsehood. In this instance both decoys were written and sealed before the officer reached Columbia. It was important, however, to have the memorandum describing the inclosed bills properly verified by a disinterested witness. Suppose the postmaster should rob the letter and spend the money, and it should be found in the hands of the party to whom he had passed it. The thief could argue that the memorandum was falsely and wickedly manufactured by the special agent to correspond with the supposed discovery, and that not he but the agent was the real criminal.

Accordingly the officer wished the assistant postmaster at Columbia — a gentleman universally respected for integrity, and whose word no one in that community would doubt — to be prepared, in case a necessity should arise, to identify the notes. They carefully examined the envelope, with the view of reopening it; but as it was firmly sealed, and as the agent had no duplicate with the Calhoun postmark, — a matter of vital importance to the success of the scheme, — the assistant copied the

memorandum in a record-book of the office, instead of describing the bills from personal inspection. By either method the verification would be equally complete. The incident strongly impressed upon the minds of both gentlemen the thoroughness with which the flap was secured. In the presence of each other they inclosed the two letters in one of the package-envelopes provided by the department for registered matter, and sealed it with wax. The missive was then turned over to the assistant to be dispatched by the outgoing mail.

In telling the story of crime and its detection, one is tempted to pause, more frequently perhaps than is agreeable to the reader, to moralize on the impossibility of either hiding guilt, or of obliterating the evidences of its existence. If Nature photographs on imperishable plates, as perhaps she may, every deed, and word, and thought, the dread record will add little to the certainty of discovery and retribution. No cover is big enough to cover itself. Even darkness and solitude refuse to befriend the wrong-doer. The sands of the desert, the storm-beaten rocks on the lonely mountain-side, the restless billows of the deep, scorn to hide the guilty actions perpetrated in their presence: The very precaution taken for the purpose of eluding pursuit becomes the clue which pilots the avenger to the hiding-place of the criminal, be it in the wilderness or in the busiest haunts of men.

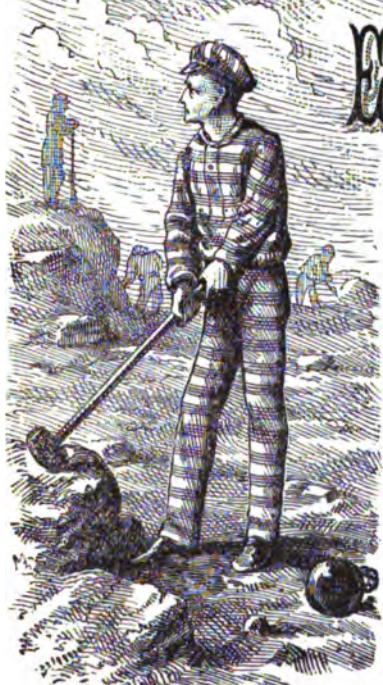
But, inquires the doubter, how on your hypothesis do you account for the enormities — the arsons, the robberies, the murders — that go unexplained and unpunished?

Our answer would be, that in every instance sufficient traces are left behind to enable a thoroughly competent detective to connect unerringly the offense and the perpetrator. The failures are attributable to lack of skill on the part of officers — not to the lack of evidence.

The evidence of the assistant postmaster at Columbia refuted the story of the son that the letter for John Converse was broken open when it reached the office at Oldbury, for nothing but a charge of nitro-glycerine could have done the work. The tes-

timony of the father was contradicted by his own statements made in the presence of witnesses at the time of his arrest. Thus the falsehoods contrived to shield a thief from the penalties of his crime were so effectually exposed that after a brief consultation the jury brought in a verdict of guilty. He was sentenced to a term of ten years in the penitentiary, but after serving two, received a pardon from the President. The last the special agent heard of Ridley he was actually applying to the department for reappointment as postmaster at Oldbury! If he wishes an indorsement from one familiar with an eventful portion of his career, he is at liberty to use the statements contained in the foregoing narrative.

The Conspirators.



His just deserts.

EARLY in the year 1872 there began a series of alarming robberies on the route between Toledo, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York, which long baffled the ingenuity not only of the agents of the department, but of the skilled detectives of Pinkerton's force, who were employed by Adams Express Company, one of the principal sufferers, to work upon the case. At irregular intervals, numerous letters, passing eastward, containing checks, drafts, and money, were abstracted from the mails, and a few days later, by means of forged indorsements, the negotiable paper was collected at different cities, through the

agency of different express companies. All the transactions growing out of each robbery were necessarily compressed into a very brief period; and so artfully were the details planned, that by the time the forgeries were discovered, the rogues had disappeared completely from view.

The line between Toledo and Buffalo is one of the most important postal routes in the country, the distribution of mails between the east and the west being performed in commodious cars fitted up for the purpose, so that letters and papers are hurried forward to their ultimate destination without any delay whatever at intermediate points. To accomplish the work, four clerks are required on each car, and during the greater part of the distance they are kept busily occupied.

Several letters going east over the Lake Shore Road, on the 23d of April, 1872, the date when this remarkable series of depredations began, failed to reach the offices of destination, and, but for the occurrences that immediately followed, would have dropped to the level of commonplace losses by mail. The ordinary thief aims to confine his operations exclusively to letters containing money, and by practice often becomes very expert in distinguishing remittances of currency. Whatever drafts, checks, or other negotiable paper happen to fall into his hands, are usually destroyed at the first opportunity. So far as possible he avoids molesting any but money letters, partly, perhaps, from a faint regard for the rights of correspondents, and still more because each loss increases the chances of detection.

A day or two later, a young man passing under the name of C. H. Rugby, deposited for collection with the American Express Company, at Albany, New York, three drafts, amounting in the aggregate to twenty-eight hundred dollars. Through intermediate fictitious indorsements all were made payable to his order. Neither bore any external mark of fraud. In due time the paper was converted into currency, and awaited in the vaults of the company the pleasure of the owner. In this instance, however, Mr. Rugby, being a novice at one of the boldest and most desperate games the swindler can undertake, failed to be identified to the satisfaction of the cashier, who accordingly declined to turn over the funds. Finding that, through incompleteness of preparations, he was doomed to failure at Albany, he directed the packages

to be forwarded to New York city, and hurried thither himself.

Among the trophies of the first raid was a note addressed by a merchant of Rowley, Missouri, to H. B. Claflin & Co., one of the largest dry-goods houses in New York. A hint or two from the context germinated fruitfully in the fertile brain of the adventurer. Rowley, Missouri, was an excellent town to hail from, and the reputable dealer, whose innocent letter had gone so sadly astray, could be made to stand sponsor for a stranger among strangers.

On a bright morning in the latter part of April, a young man of rather loud manners, but somewhat nervous and excitable withal, walked into the private office of Mr. Claflin, and handed him a letter of introduction purporting to come from his correspondent at Rowley. The bearer, Mr. C. H. Rugby, was described as a responsible merchant of that place, on a visit to the east for the purchase of goods, and was warmly commended to the favor of Mr. Claflin. That gentleman, raising his eyes from the note, scanned him cautiously, and inquired on what terms he wished to purchase. The pseudo-dealer replied with slight embarrassment that he was ready to pay cash, and had the requisite funds at the express office, it being only necessary for the firm to send some one down to identify him. Mr. Claflin directed an employé to accompany Rugby to the express office, but the cashier declined to deliver the money without a written order from the firm. This Rugby succeeded in procuring, and on presentation to the superintendent, it was indorsed "O. K.," and passed on to the paying clerk. The packages were withdrawn from the safe, and two of them checked off on the register, when the clerk called to the superintendent, who was about to leave the building, and placed in his hands a letter from the office at Albany. The uneasy manner and excited movements of Rugby had aroused the suspicions of the manager at that place, so that when directed to forward the collections to New York city, he took the precaution to dispatch a note at the

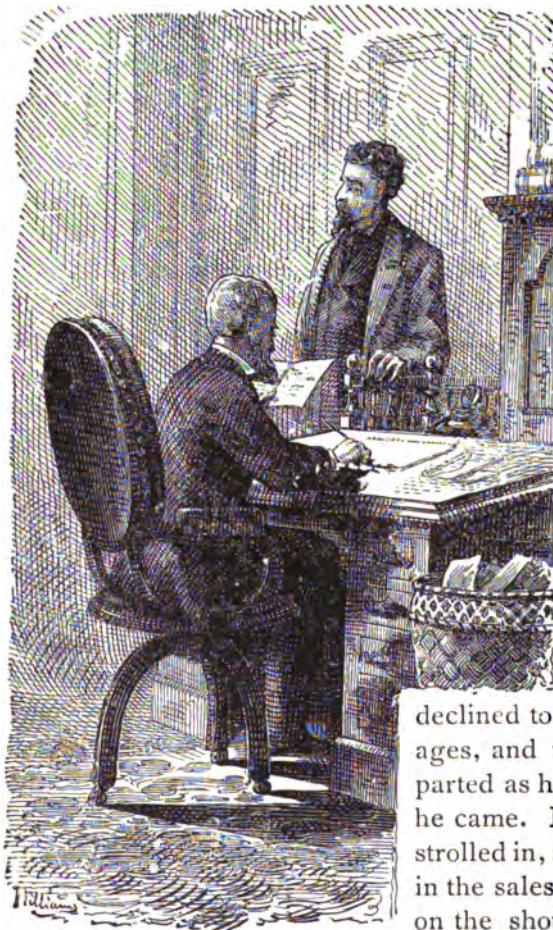
same time, expressing his apprehensions, and urging unusual care in making the delivery. After a brief consultation, the superintendent decided to send the packages to the office of

Claflin & Co., and informed Rugby that he could call there for them. A messenger was accordingly dispatched with the money, and the man who was so anxious to lay his hands on it was not long in following. By this time Mr. Claflin, beginning to suspect that the merchant from Rowley might be more anxious to sell than to buy,

declined to receive the packages, and the messenger departed as heavily freighted as he came. Meanwhile Rugby strolled in, and while loitering in the sales-room, was tapped on the shoulder by a clerk, who notified him that the proprietor wished to see him in

"That gentleman, raising his eyes from the note, scanned him cautiously."

his office. Rugby's courage was fast oozing away, for as disappointments culminated he knew not what exposure and peril any moment might bring ; but, putting on a bold face for the



final effort, he proceeded to comply with the request. With a polite intimation that a delay of a few hours could not seriously incommod him, Mr. Clafin regretted that he could not identify him till he had telegraphed to Rowley, to inquire if everything was right. He had sent a dispatch, and expected an answer in the course of the day. The stranger seemed satisfied, and with a "Good-day, I will call in a little while," stepped out, not to return. A few days later, when the real character of the transaction came to light, no one of the parties in interest knew whence the swindler came or whither he went.

The stock of drafts in possession of the robber was not yet exhausted. The day after Mr. Clafin enjoyed so many interviews with the merchant from Rowley, a man representing himself to be a member of the house of Flynn Brothers, of Norwalk, Ohio, stepped into a grocery in Philadelphia, and effected a purchase amounting to several hundred dollars, offering in payment a check for twelve hundred dollars, mailed at Fostoria, Ohio, to a firm in New York. As over a week had elapsed since the issue of the paper, the holder telegraphed to the drawee to inquire if it was good, and receiving an affirmative reply, did not hesitate to play boldly. The grocer accepted the draft, giving his own check on a local bank for a balance of four hundred and sixty dollars. The purchaser of salt and sugar for the retail house of Flynn Brothers was joined by a comrade on emerging into the street, and the pair sought out a clothing-store in the neighborhood, where they invested quite liberally in the way of replenishing their wardrobes. The check of the grocer was offered in payment, but the clothier, not being acquainted with the drawer, declined to receive it without making inquiry at the bank.

"Very well," said the stranger, "send down your messenger, and if you find it all right, you can give me the change."

After considerable parley and several excursions on the part of the errand-boy, the proprietor became satisfied of the sufficiency of the check, and paid over the balance in currency.

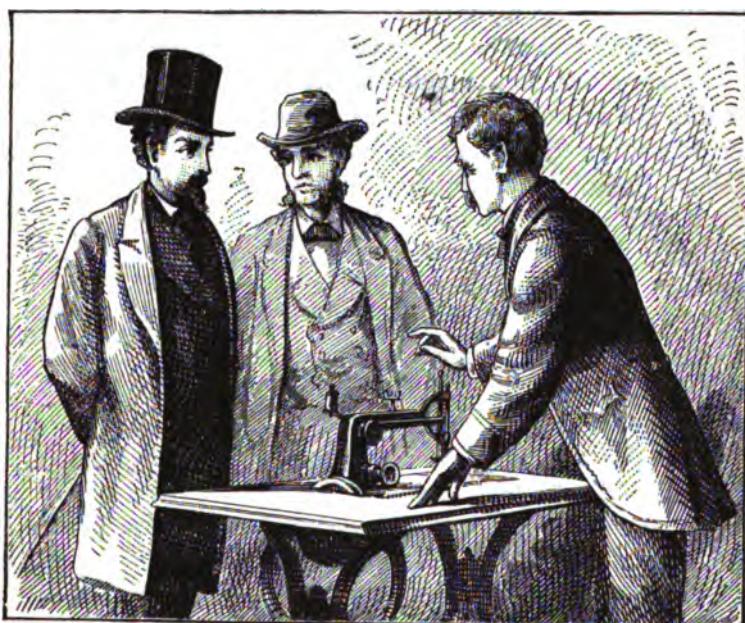
This was the first and only money realized by the operator from the robberies of April 23d, and seemed a meager return for the cost and dangers of the venture. But failure served to indicate the imperfections of his method, and, instead of discouraging him from further frauds, proved rich in suggestions for the successful development of subsequent villanies.

On the 28th of May, another heavy raid was made on the eastward bound mail between Toledo and Buffalo. Among the spoils were two checks — one for fifteen hundred dollars, mailed the previous day at La Crosse, Wisconsin, by Hon. C. C. Washburn, and made payable by his indorsement to the order of Dr. W. L. Richardson, of Boston, Massachusetts; and another for twelve hundred, drawn on a bank in New York city. Receiving no acknowledgment for the remittance, Governor Washburn wrote a second letter to Dr. Richardson, and was informed in reply that the first had not come to hand. He then sent a duplicate, which Dr. Richardson deposited in a Boston bank for collection. It was forwarded to the drawee in New York, where it was protested and returned on the ground that the original had been paid.

It was soon learned that the original had been collected by one R. L. Dudley through the Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) agency of the Adams Express Company, having been deposited by him on the 31st of May, and the proceeds having been paid to him June 3d. Several years before, Dudley had resided temporarily in Pittsburgh, and had married in the vicinity. A sister of his wife and a brother-in-law were then living in Allegheny City, on the opposite side of the river. Dudley was identified at the express office by Mr. J. D. Forrester, a dealer in sewing-machines. On the pretense of buying a machine, Dudley called at the salesroom in company with his brother-in-law, a customer of Mr. Forrester, and had one sent to his boarding-house for trial. Having no cause whatever to suspect that he was the victim of an imposition, Mr. Forrester fell into the trap, and innocently enacted the part prepared for him by the forger.

The swindler was not so lucky with the other draft deposited for collection at the same time. Through haste, or carelessness, the letter "e" was left out in writing the word twelve; and on that ground the New York bank refused payment.

By the time an agent of the department reached Pittsburgh, Dudley had fled to parts unknown, his family connec-



"On the pretense of buying a machine, Dudley called at the salesroom in company with his brother-in-law."

tions professing entire ignorance of his plans and movements. Very few knew him even by sight. During his late sojourn at Allegheny City, he boarded with his brother-in-law, and studiously avoided public observation. This was the only point during his short and eventful career in forging drafts stolen from the mails where he passed under his real name.

During the month of June quiet prevailed on the Lake

Shore; but early in July a third swoop was made upon the eastward bound mail. The following day, drafts, abstracted from the rifled letters to the amount of five thousand two hundred dollars, were placed in White's Bank at Buffalo for collection; and another for nine hundred and forty-seven dollars and twenty-five cents was deposited in the express office for the same purpose. All were indorsed by C. H. Bogart, a late comer in Buffalo, who was supposed to be engaged in the slate business. As his main object was to win the confidence of the banker, and to become acquainted with the employés at the express office, he remained under cover most of the time, and did not regret the lack of customers. Four or five days after depositing the paper, Bogart reappeared, neatly arrayed in clean linen, and, dropping into the bank where he had opened an account, inquired if the collections had been made. Receiving an affirmative reply, he drew his own check for over four thousand dollars, with the remark that he was obliged to make a large payment. Luckily for the bank, but unfortunately for the schemer, the cashier gave him in exchange a certified check on them, which he was unable to convert into currency, as he failed to establish his identity. At the express office he fared better, going away richer by nine hundred and forty-seven dollars and twenty-five cents than he entered. From that evening forward, the places in Buffalo that had lately known Bogart knew him no more. Like the unhappy traffickers at Vanity Fair, he bursted like a bubble, and seemed to evaporate in the air. His landlady was inconsolable, and customers, if they sought him at all, sought him in vain.

For five or six weeks everything moved on smoothly. Suddenly, about the middle of September, the malady broke out in a new place. Four drafts for \$1000, \$500, \$130, and \$100 respectively, which should have passed over the Lake Shore Road on the seventeenth of the month, instead of reaching the owners at Boston and Hartford, were deposited in two express offices at Newark, New Jersey, for collection, indorsed in due

form by R. D. Randall. The gentleman in question had an office in Newark, but, for greater salubrity of climate, resided at Elizabeth. Dressing well and spending money freely, he made many acquaintances who regarded him as the prince of good fellows, and some of whom stood ready not merely to identify him, but to indorse for him. Gaining skill by practice, and boldness by immunity, he was fast rising from the rank of low cheats to the more exclusive class of accomplished swindlers. The blunders which thwarted the immature arrangements of the merchant from Rowley, he could smile at now as the mistakes of a tyro. Already he began to wear the air and manners of an artist, conscious of the ability to reach the envied heights of the profession. There still remained a good deal of the swagger and turgidity incident to the period of incubation and the intoxication of first success; but minor blemishes of deportment are rapidly toned down by time and by the conflicts of life. Randall experienced no difficulty in procuring the money on three of the drafts; but the collection of the fourth was for some reason delayed till he became afraid to call for the proceeds. In a very short time the forgeries were detected, but once more the bird had fled.

The next we hear of the forger is at Rochester, New York, where he rented an office under the name of R. W. Davis, and, by liberal expenditures for liquor and cigars, forced a rapid acquaintance among the parties through whom he proposed to operate. On the 1st of November he deposited at the express office a draft for seven hundred and seventy dollars, stolen in the usual way, and, on receiving the proceeds a few days later, decamped.

On the 7th of January, 1873, another miscellaneous lot of letters was stolen from the mails on the Lake Shore Road. A couple of days later, a draft for nine hundred and twenty-nine dollars and eighty-six cents, purchased at the Merchants' National Bank, Toledo, and forwarded by mail to E. A. Mudge & Co., of Boston, was deposited with the Adams

Express Company at Philadelphia for collection, and at the same time also a draft for three hundred and twenty-two dollars and eighty-five cents, drawn by the First National Bank of Toledo in favor of Tenney, Aldrich & Co., of Boston. By forged indorsements, both were made payable to the order of T. H. Cone, the name assumed by the swindler in Philadelphia. The cashier declined to receive the drafts till the holder was identified, the company from repeated losses having instructed their agents to use extreme care and vigilance in delivering valuable packages to strangers. Cone manifested his uneasiness by spitting a great deal of tobacco-juice on the floor, the excessive salivation attracting the attention of the cashier. It is noticeable that thieves, embezzlers, and other miscreants, who live by preying on society, if at all addicted to the use of the weed, chew inordinately when brought to bay. The symptom might often be valuable in diagnosing the purposes of a scoundrel, though men entirely innocent of evil intentions may, under the pressure of extreme excitement, do the same thing. To satisfy the doubts of the cashier, Cone remarked that he was well known to the attachés of the office, one or two of whom identified him as a person who had on several occasions received valuable packages through the agency. Without further questioning, the drafts were received for collection, and in due time the proceeds were paid to the ostensible owner.

The swindler resided about two months in Philadelphia, fleeing of course as soon as the fruits of the experiment were securely harvested. During the period he occupied quarters in close proximity to the office of Adams Express Company, and directly under the eye of Pinkerton's detective agency. Had he deliberately planned to thrust his head between the jaws of the lion, he could not have accomplished the purpose more effectually. Renting a part of a large room from Mr. E. M. Grattan, printer and stationer, he hung out a sign, printed in conspicuous black letters, "T. H. Cone, Real Estate Agent." He took the office on the 16th of November, paying a month's

rent in advance; and on the 16th of December renewed the lease for a month on the same terms. His communications were written on tinted paper, bearing the printed letter-head, "Thomas H. Cone, Real Estate Broker, No. 323 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia;" and printed cards, adorned with the same inscription, were freely distributed. Modest placards were posted up in the neighborhood to inform the public that parties desiring to buy, sell, or lease real estate, could be accommodated by calling on Thomas H. Cone.

During office hours Cone seemed to be driven with work. He had few callers, but his pen was constantly flying. Persons having business with Mr. Grattan, the landlord, and observing the industry of the great real-estate broker, were vaguely impressed with the idea that he was a rising young man, born to thrive and prosper. How could bargains and greenbacks help gravitating toward so bright and active a youth any more than the raindrops can help falling upon the lap of earth?

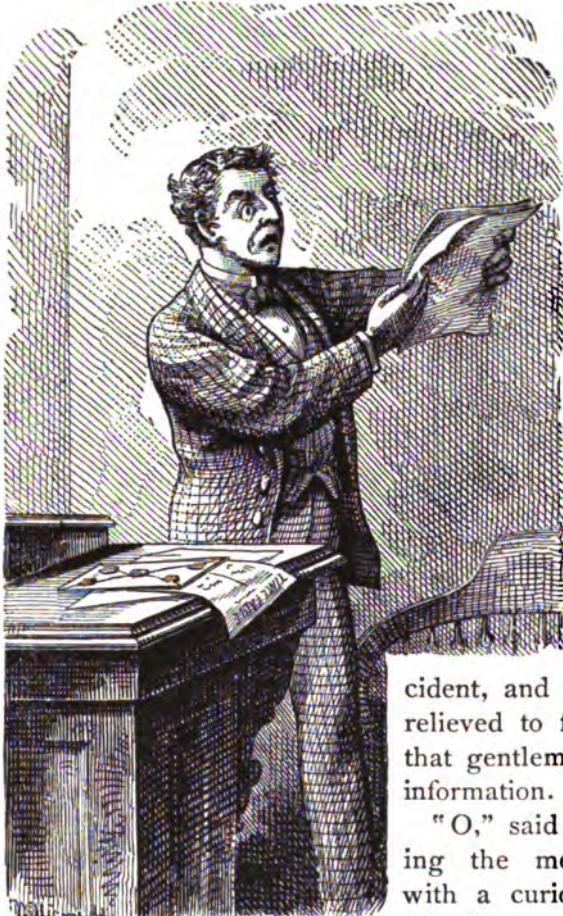
Occasionally mysterious packages, directed to "Thomas H. Cone, No. 323 Chestnut Street," were delivered at the office. These were neatly done up, heavily sealed with wax, and marked as containing money. Clerks and messenger-boys began to regard the stranger with the deference instinctively rendered in a material age by impecuniosity to wealth. He was evidently a capitalist — destined perhaps at no distant day to be one of the millionaires of the city. In an unlucky hour, however, the swelling wave of confidence received a rude shock, and came near dissolving into mist. A package externally similar to the others came from Trenton one day when Cone happened to be away. Not foreseeing a contingency of this sort, and aiming by an air of assurance to inspire a feeling of trust in the minds of his associates, he had incautiously authorized one of the clerks of Mr. Grattan to open valuable packets in his absence. As the curiosity of the youth had been already whetted to a keen edge by like tokens of inflowing affluence, he lost no time in following to the letter

the instructions of his principal. He hurriedly tore open the wrapple, expecting to discover a huge roll of bills, but found

nothing more valuable than a bundle of obsolete railroad time-tables. The clerk was astonished and in some degree troubled. He might be accused of stealing the contents, and of taking this coarse method of covering the crime. On the return of Cone, he hastened to explain the incident, and was not a little relieved to find how coolly that gentleman received the information.

"O," said the broker, eying the melancholy ruins with a curious smile, "my friend has made an absurd mistake. I must notify him at once, and he will make it all right, as you will see."

He sat down at his desk, and, dashing off a letter or dispatch, hastened to acquaint his mythical correspondent with the facts. By this time the forger had become too skilled in



Expecting to discover a huge roll of bills, he found nothing more valuable than a bundle of obsolete railroad time-tables."

artifice, and too self-possessed in manner, to be thrown off his guard by a slight mishap like the discovery made by the clerk. His little device succeeded perfectly. Meeting the clerk the next day, Cone exhibited a check, remarking, "You see it is all right, as I told you it would be. When my friend learned of his blunder, he immediately sent me this." Fearing that the story might get abroad to the injury of his credit, Cone explained the "joke" at the express office, enjoying a hearty laugh at his own expense.

At this juncture the Adams Express Company applied to Pinkerton's agency to aid in hunting down the thieves, Major Benjamin Franklin, the acute and accomplished superintendent of the Philadelphia division, taking charge of the work. He immediately proceeded to inquire into all the known circumstances connected with the brief sojourn of the forger in the city, but very little was to be learned. It was discovered that he had boarded somewhere on Columbia Avenue, but at what house no one could tell. The few acquaintances, temporarily cultivated for the purpose of identification, knew nothing of his haunts or habits, and had no information which threw the slightest light upon the mystery of his disappearance. The sign, painted in bold letters, "T. H. Cone, Real Estate Agent," still glared an ominous defiance in the very face of the agency; and this, on a casual scrutiny, seemed to be the only remaining memento of the swindler. Fortunately for the ends of justice, nothing, however minute or apparently insignificant, escaped the trained eye of the detective. Major Franklin visited the late office of Cone. A desk and a chair or two constituted the only furniture. He lifted the cover of the desk to find only rusty pens, waste paper, a bottle of ink, and a few printed cards and letter-heads. It looked like a hopeless search, when the major picked up a piece of blotting-paper. Ordinarily nothing could seem more trivial or valueless than a sheet of dusty, ink-besmeared, discarded blotting-paper, but in this instance it afforded the clue which was to lead to the capture of the robber and of his daring associate in

crime. Isolated as Cone seemed to live, he wrote to a few correspondents, and had blotted sundry letters and envelopes upon the sheet that was now passing under the keen scrutiny of Major Franklin. The impression of the addresses, reversed, were scattered over the paper, some clear and others dim, but quite a number easily recognizable. By aid of a looking-glass, placed at right angles upon the pad, the names appeared as written, and one was "W. R. Wales, White House, Ohio." The discovery was made January 14th.

Major Franklin at once sent skilled operatives to hunt up the owners of the respective names, to inquire into their antecedents and habits, with the view of learning whether either one was probably concerned in the crimes. They went east and west, covering the whole field simultaneously. With a single exception, all whose lives and conduct were thus brought under review, were soon pronounced free from guilty complicity with the forger.

The detective who went to White House, Ohio, was not long in reaching the conclusion that he had struck the right trail. Wales was absent from home when the investigation began, but the operative noiselessly explored his haunts, and became acquainted with his history. He soon learned that Wales was fast and extravagant, given to expensive vices, and reckless in the waste of money. He gambled heavily, for the most part on the losing side, cultivating at the same time the society of bad men and abandoned women.

By this time the special agents of the department had learned that all the losses occurred on the runs of Mr. Reuben Harmon, one of the head clerks on the railway postal route between Toledo and Buffalo. As already stated, the distribution on this great thoroughfare was so heavy as to require four men to each car, two for assorting letters, and two for papers. Going east, Mr. Harmon handled the letters for New England and New York.

The depredations not only occurred on his trips, but

fell exclusively upon the states for which he distributed. Whether innocent or guilty, these circumstances amply sufficed to fasten suspicion upon him, and to justify the officers of the department in exercising a close surveillance over his movements. Another singular fact clouded the reputation of the "crew" running under Harmon as head clerk. On several occasions, letters bearing the postmark of offices along the line of the Lake Shore and its feeders, were found by the local carrier in the Exchange Street letter-box, near the depot at Buffalo. A comparison of dates showed that in each instance these came through at the times when the robberies were perpetrated. Mr. William B. Thompson, chief clerk charged with the general supervision of postal matters on the route, at first surmised that "the boys" neglected to clean out their car properly, and that afterwards finding these letters, and being ashamed to take them to the post-office, they deposited them in a street box. When interrogated on the subject, each and all denied that they had done so. It was still possible that the railroad hand who swept the car after the clerks had left, might have found them, and through inadvertence taken them to the most convenient depository; but he, too, stated unequivocally that he had never seen a letter either in the boxes or on the floor while cleaning the room.

But one solution of the enigma remained. The thief, whoever he might be, after overhauling the plunder and making such selections as promised the most abundant returns, restored the residue, not caring, perhaps, to harass the public where no profit could be made. A side box was probably selected as the receptacle, because the manipulator would be less likely to attract attention than at the office, where it was not impossible that the return of a number of letters already postmarked might lead to instant detection.

The drafts being deposited for collection in from one to three days after they were stolen, it was surmised at first

that the forger met the dishonest clerk at the cars, and, after taking the plunder, hurried to the town where he had made arrangements to secure identification. By this time the agents were satisfied that Rugby, Bogart, Randall, and Cone were one and the same person, and that his real name was R. L. Dudley—a former resident of Allegheny City. An accurate description of him was obtained and placed in the hands of the various officers on the watch.

Patiently and perseveringly the agents applied in vain the tests which usually succeed in fastening the evidence of guilt upon depredators on the mails. Their ingenuity was racked in contriving new devices for the detection of the offender, and still the losses went on. Another clerk was introduced into the car who was specially charged to watch every movement of the suspected party during his entire week of duty. A special agent rode up and down the road, *incog.*, to observe what took place on the outside of the railway post-office, yet nothing wrong was discovered. Decoy letters, after passing through the hands of the suspected clerks, reappeared intact, while nothing whatever could be discerned in their movements to indicate guilt. In fact, the more closely the innocent are watched, the more clearly their virtue is revealed.

About the middle of February, the last and crowning robbery of the series was perpetrated. While detectives were on the lookout for Wales, he suddenly turned up again in Ohio, and, making a trip over the Lake Shore road, disappeared as suddenly as he came. He departed, however, heavily freighted with letters stolen from Harmon's car. Proceeding over the Central Road, he met his confederate, as was subsequently learned, in the depot at Albany, having telegraphed from Rochester of his coming. Going together to the Delavan House, and finding the haul a rich one, they spent the evening hilariously.

The next morning, our acquaintance of many *aliases* rode over to Troy, and deposited with the National Express Com-

pany for collection a draft calling for \$1829. Among the letters stolen on the late trip over the Lake Shore was one mailed February 11th, at St. Louis, Missouri, by Richardson & Co., to J. C. Ayer & Co., of Lowell, Massachusetts, containing a draft for \$15,719.11, a sum sufficiently large to call for the greatest circumspection in the method of presenting it. The forger took this to New York city in person ; but failing to be satisfactorily identified, carried it back to Troy, and, on drawing the \$1829, left it with the same company to be collected. The amount involved was so great that the rogues, eager to secure the booty but apprehensive of trouble, returned in company to New York for the purpose of seeing whether the draft was honored by the bank on which it was drawn. The forger, who from acknowledged superiority of address and assurance, managed all the more delicate operations, repaired early to the bank, and hung around for hours on pretense that he expected a friend. During the time he engaged in conversation with the local detective. Though his attention was strained to the utmost, he could not follow the rapid methods of doing business over the counter, or gain any information in reference to the draft. Somewhat disheartened at the unsatisfactory result of the journey, the pair returned to Troy the same night, arriving there at eight the next morning.

As a preliminary move, Wales went to the express office to learn if any parties likely to make trouble were to be seen about the place. Not being known himself, his confederate having deposited the papers, he swaggered up to the desk of the delivery-clerk, and inquired, "Is there a pair of boots here for George Campbell?"

Having examined his books, the expressman answered in the negative.

"They ought to be here," said the thief, "and it is a d—n shame that I am disappointed." With that he continued the conversation briefly on irrelevant matters, closely noticing

everybody and everything, but saw nothing to excite suspicion that any unusual movement was on foot.

Never before had the thieves so much at stake, and they played the game with corresponding caution. To make sure that no officer of the law had been hunting for him in his absence, Dudley first visited the room where he kept a desk, and was reassured by learning that no inquiries had been made for him. He then strolled over to the express office with as much apparent coolness as if the receipt of fifteen thousand dollar packages was a matter of daily occurrence. A hurried glance around the establishment confirming the favorable report of Wales, he asked the cashier if the draft had been paid. That official answered affirmatively, adding that he could not deliver the money, as a letter had been received from the superintendent in New York, directing them not to pay it to any one unless fully identified and responsible.

The forger, who passed in Troy under the name of W. W. Gray, had devoted himself during the whole period of his residence there, to preparations for this very emergency. Foreseeing what questions would be asked and that identification would be required, he rented desk-room on his arrival in the town from an elderly gentleman of high standing in the community, who, with his son, carried on the business of insurance. The time had now come for utilizing the acquaintance. In conformity with intimations previously thrown out, Gray finally decided, on the eventful morning in question, to take a life policy for ten thousand dollars. The agent was delighted. As the city had been repeatedly combed by solicitors, it was a novel experience to meet with a customer who applied voluntarily for the benefits which heretofore he had been compelled to expend much time and eloquence in commanding. Most of the patrons recorded on the books of the agency had finally surrendered, after frequent bombardments, only to avoid the worse alternative of death in the last ditch. The heart of the old gentle-

man warmed with a generous regard for the prudent and provident youth.

While the agent was filling up the application, Gray remarked that he could pay the first installment on receiving the proceeds of a draft left with the express company for collection. "As I am not very well known around there," continued the forger, "are you willing to take the trouble of walking over and vouching for me?"

"Certainly, certainly, sir," replied the insurance man, thrown completely off his guard by the coolness of the applicant, and blinded by eagerness to secure the premium. "It will give me great pleasure to do so, or to serve you in any other way."

Together they proceeded deliberately to the office, chatting pleasantly on the way. "Permit me to introduce my friend, Mr. Gray — Mr. W. W. Gray," said the agent to the cashier. Thus vouched for, the identity of the robber was not further questioned. The money — mostly in small bills — was delivered over the counter, the pile filling a medium-sized carpet-bag.

On leaving the doorway, Gray asked his very serviceable acquaintance, "What bank would you recommend as safe? As soon as I deposit the money, I will call at your office and take the policy."

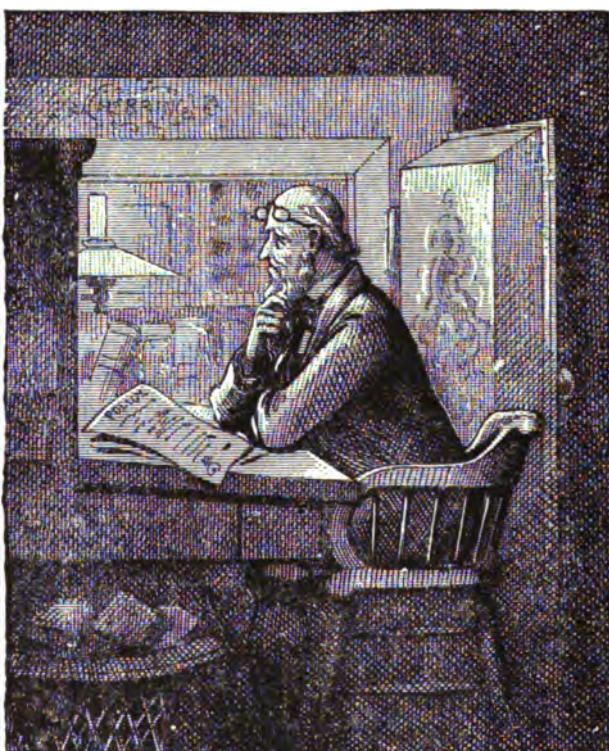
"Well," replied the agent, "they are all good, I believe; the First National is convenient and accommodating."

With polite thanks for the information, and the assurance that he would "soon be around," Gray, waving a courteous adieu to his companion, disappeared around the corner.

That evening the insurance agent lingered at the office much beyond the usual hour, waiting for the return of the customer. He waited the next day, and many days, not receiving a penny in the way of premium to console him for being duped. Having used the ladder to mount to fortune, the rogue, as usually happens in such cases, kicked it contemptuously aside when it ceased to be further useful.

That night, the pair returned to New York city with over seventeen thousand dollars as the proceeds of the raid. Going to the Metropolitan Hotel, they divided the money and separated the following day, to meet next under very different circumstances.

Wales returned to White House, Ohio, elated at the success



"That evening, the insurance agent lingered at the office much beyond the usual hour, waiting for the return of the customer."

of his late enterprise. An operative detailed by Pinkerton's agency for the purpose was already on the ground, waiting, somewhat impatiently, for his appearance. From this time on the robber was kept under the closest surveillance, the detective, unobserved and unsuspected, following him contin-

ually when out of the house, watching with sleepless eye every action and every movement. Whether drinking in saloons or swaggering on the street, an ear trained by long practice to preternatural acuteness of hearing listened to every word. On the 27th of February, Wales deposited five thousand dollars in the First National Bank of Toledo. He was a capitalist now, and, besides manifesting wealth by lavish expenditure, determined to go into business, and thus command the consideration which loose habits and a wayward life had failed to secure. In pursuance of this plan he purchased a stone quarry, evidently intending to devote the future to legitimate work. Like many others, however, he learned too late that it is far easier to embark in a career of crime than to break away from its dangerous fascinations. The will is subject to strange infirmities, and, when perverted by evil courses, fails to respond readily to reason or conscience. The drunkard, hanging consciously on the verge of ruin, cannot abandon the cup. So, where one's morals become unhinged by flagrant outrages upon society, it is vain to expect voluntary reform. Once fairly in the maelstrom, escape is well-nigh impossible. A force unseen but resistless draws the victim on to ruin and retribution.

Wales was ill at ease. It soon became apparent that he was meditating a fresh move, and the detective watched the unfolding drama with redoubled vigilance. Boon companions ceased to interest, and after a few days the stone quarry lost its attractions. Meanwhile his plans, as evidenced by various actions, became more and more uncertain and vacillating. All at once, forming a sudden resolution, he packed his trunk, drew several hundred dollars from bank, and purchased a ticket for Troy, New York. A quiet, unobtrusive man, easily mistaken for a farmer fresh from the fields, whom the traveler would hardly compliment with a passing glance, stood near the platform when the baggage was checked, and followed the owner aboard the train, occupying a section in the same sleeping-car. In due time the journey

was accomplished, the eye of the unsuspected detective following the movements of the thief with the relentlessness of Fate. Unconscious of the impending crash, Wales gave no heed to the "countryman," who had now become a companion as inseparable as a shadow at midday. At Troy, a ticket



"At this point, a new character appeared on the scene, in the person of a fresh, fair, blooming young woman."

was purchased to North Adams, Massachusetts, the eager traveler pushing on as if destiny depended on speed.

At this point a new character appeared on the scene in the person of a fresh, fair, blooming young woman, apparently eighteen or twenty years of age. The warmth of the greeting, reinforced by the interchange of magnetic glances,

sufficed to explain the unrest of the robber while trying to establish a business in the vicinity of Toledo. The couple proceeded together to Pittsfield, where Wales registered as "Henry Norman and wife, of Toledo," the detective securing an adjacent room. The next morning, the three took the train for Boston. Wales took a carriage to one of the principal hotels, and registered as at Pittsfield. The detective followed, and in due time, by skillful manœuvres, furthered by other well-known parties who now mysteriously rose up to share in the denouement, managed to secure an adjoining room with a glass transom between.

Lost in the delights of illicit love, Wales surrendered wholly to the charms of the enchantress. Rare fruits and costly wines were ordered in profusion. All that a plethoric pocket-book could do to purchase pleasure for coarse natures was freely contributed. The pair took a few drives about the city, and made occasional visits to places of entertainment, but were too much absorbed in each other to care to waste much time on the cold world outside.

Associations of this character, however, are dangerous in more ways than one. Proud of his achievements as a swindler, Wales could not repress the desire to talk about them, and, in the absence of Dudley, told the whole story to his *inamorata*. The circumstances were not given in a connected narrative, but by piecemeal, at odd intervals, the curiosity and sympathy of the woman acting as a powerful stimulant upon the loquacious vanity of the man. In response to timorous suggestions from the frail beauty that a day of reckoning might come, he threw out such remarks as, "I am not afraid; they will never find me out." "I am too sharp to be caught." "Dudley is as keen as they make them; that last haul of his was a good one." "I can always tell whether a letter has got money in it by the way it feels; practice makes perfect."

Fragments of conversation imperfectly overheard tallied exactly with information already in the hands of the detec-

tives. One day, while the couple were out on an excursion of pleasure, a sleuth-hound of the law, contriving to gain entrance to their apartment, found among the effects of Wales a small memorandum-book, in which was written the address "R. D. Randall, Newark, New Jersey," in the now familiar chirography of the forger. The cumulative weight of the evidence already developed was overwhelming. Around the wretched criminal, unconscious of danger and buried in the enjoyment of gross pleasures, the coils were tightening so closely that escape from the iron gripe was no longer possible.

Of course it is very naughty, and in the ordinary relations of life altogether indefensible, for the prying eye and listening ear to invade the sanctity of the home or private apartment of another. A thoroughly honest person will no more appropriate surreptitiously the secrets than steal the money of a neighbor. Fortunately, in conducting the detective operations of the post-office department, one is rarely compelled, even by extreme exigencies, to do or say aught repugnant to the nicest sense of honor or duty. The unseen agent stands aloof from the suspected party, abusing no confidence express or implied, but ready in case of theft to pounce on the criminal like an eagle on its prey. So long as postmasters and clerks remain honest, their immunity is absolute. Decoys may drop around them like autumn leaves, but they fall harmlessly, the test only demonstrating more clearly the integrity of the person subjected to the ordeal.

The case of Wales fell entirely outside of the ordinary routine; and exceptional diseases require exceptional treatment. For months he had defied the laws and plundered the public. By becoming an enemy of society, all the more dangerous because not openly avowed, he renounced the protection of the safeguards which by common consent render sacred the personality of the individual. As in their estimation it was a matter of paramount importance to accumulate all possible proofs of the facts, the detectives employed on the case with-

out hesitation adopted the maxim of Loyola, that "the end justifies the means."

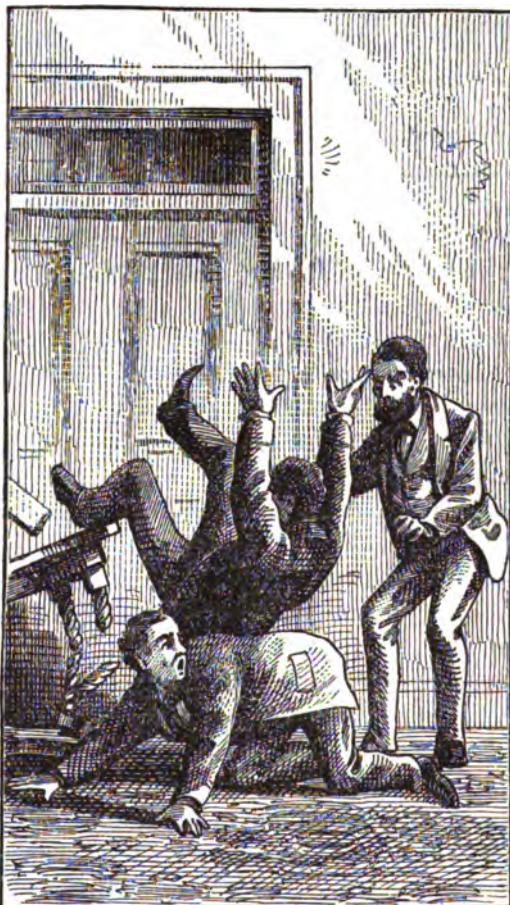
All things have an end, and the last delirious episode in the career of Wales was drawing to a close. The genius of unrest had seized upon him. He could truly say,—

"Man delights not me, nor woman neither."

From fragmentary remarks and various preparations, it was learned that the pair were about to depart; she to return to North Adams, and he to Ohio. During the visit to Boston he had lavished upon her his ill-gotten wealth with reckless prodigality; but now, on the eve of separation, measuring her love by the standard of vile greenbacks, she demanded a large sum as the price of her companionship. Although barely two months had elapsed since he bore off over eight thousand dollars as his share in the robbery consummated at Troy, the rapid shrinkage of his bank account during the short interim warned him that at this rate the last penny would soon be reached, and he accordingly demurred at first to the extravagance of the claim. Then remembering that various confidential disclosures placed him completely at her mercy, he proceeded to count out the currency, growing more slow and deliberate as the pile swelled in proportions. Finally, in a voice blending persuasiveness with menace, she proposed, as a finality, "Give me twenty-five more, and make an even six hundred."

The "boys" in the next room had fixed up a temporary platform, mounted on which one of the number watched these proceedings through a small aperture in the curtain stretched across the transom-window. Making a virtue of necessity, Wales paid over the additional twenty-five dollars, when the late storm was succeeded by a peaceful and happy calm, the affections of the couple seeming to revive with former fervor. While the officer deputed to perform the unwelcome task was watching intently the transports of reconciliation, the fragile support underneath gave way, the platform and detective

tumbling promiscuously to the floor with a crash that seemed to echo through the halls like peals of thunder. Between consternation at the mishap and efforts to repress uncontroll-



Watching intently the transports of reconciliation, the fragile support underneath gave way, and the detective tumbled promiscuously to the floor."

lable laughter, the "boys" were in a bad dilemma. However, no bones were broken, and the damage to furniture was too small for consideration.

In a few hours Wales was again on the way to Toledo. The watchful, patient, sleepless detective from Pinkerton's corps, Mr. J. W. Corson,—who had taken him up at White House, dogged his steps to the bank, the quarry, the bar-room, and the theatre, accompanied him to North Adams and on his pleasure bout to Boston,—still hung on his steps like an avenging demon. The train passed Erie, Pennsylvania, about four o'clock in the morning. As several of the drafts were collected at Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, bringing the crimes within the jurisdiction of the federal courts of Pennsylvania, Corson was provided with a warrant for the arrest of the robber, which it was necessary to serve within the limits of that state. The detective occupied the same sleeping-car on the journey. As the train thundered into Erie, Corson, pulling aside the curtain in front of Wales's berth, gave him a gentle shake.

"What is the matter?" asked the half awakened sleeper, slowly opening his eyes, and as yet not even dreaming that danger was near.

"You are my prisoner!" answered Corson, with freezing deliberation and emphasis.

"Your prisoner!" echoed the terror-stricken wretch. "There is some mistake here. You have got the wrong man. What have I done?"

"Robbed the United States mails," replied Corson, "committed numerous forgeries, and swindled the express companies. Isn't that enough? Your game is played out. You are caged at last, and, what is more, I know all the facts. I shall take you to Philadelphia. If you go along quietly and behave yourself, I will treat you like a gentleman. If you try to make trouble, I shall put you in irons. The manner in which you make the trip depends on yourself."

"Do not handcuff me," begged the thief. "I will do just as you say, and make no attempt to escape."

Corson took the first train for Philadelphia, and that evening delivered the prisoner into the custody of Superintendent

Franklin. This was the 29th of March, 1873. On searching his person, they found \$233 in currency; a gold watch and chain, valued at \$400; one cluster diamond ring, \$325; a diamond breast-pin, \$225; two diamond shirt-studs, \$250; and the memorandum-book already referred to, containing



"There is some mistake here. You have got the wrong man. What have I done?"

the address of "R. D. Randall, Newark, New Jersey," written by the forger, and also the name "C. H. Bogart," the alias of Dudley at Buffalo.

In addition to the above, there was found quite a package of railroad tickets, covering various lines from the Mississippi to the Atlantic, some unused, and others punched. The pris-

oner was plentifully supplied with visiting-cards bearing the address "Henry Norman." This was one of the names on the blotting-pad that furnished the first clue to the connection between Dudley and Wales. The latter also registered as "Henry Norman" in hotels at Philadelphia, Albany, Pittsfield, and other places.

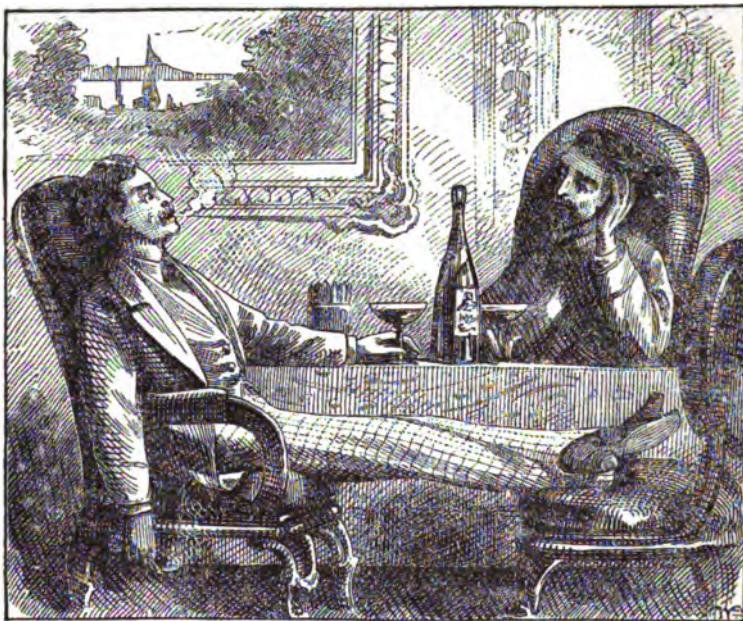
By direction of Wales, the money and jewelry were turned over to Adams Express Company on the ground that the articles were purchased wholly or in part with funds stolen from that company. The work of restitution was carried still further. Of the five thousand dollars deposited on the 27th of February in the First National Bank of Toledo, two thousand still remained to the credit of the robber. This, together with various other property in Ohio, was also surrendered to the company.

Pinkerton's agency occupies a massive, five-storied building in the business center of Philadelphia. Wales was placed on the third floor in a sort of honorable confinement, being allowed almost every privilege except liberty. Excellent fare, moistened not unfrequently with choice wines, was served regularly three times a day. Mr. George H. Bangs, the general superintendent at New York, and Major Franklin, treated the prisoner with great kindness, and soon won his entire confidence. Meanwhile the arrest was kept quiet, since all parties were anxious for the apprehension of Dudley, as much the more accomplished and dangerous rascal of the two. Even Wales shared in the general solicitude, believing that in some way his own shattered fortunes would be bettered by the capture of his late confederate.

Melted by the kindly atmosphere and good cheer of his new quarters, and, finding all the material facts in regard to the robberies already in possession of the officers, the prisoner soon sought relief for overcharged feelings by making a full and free confession. Talk he must, and, as the whole current of his thoughts and fears and hopes flowed in one narrow, swift channel, the conversation turned continually to the

series of events that had ended in exposure, disgrace, and captivity.

Wales was born in January, 1846, at York, Sandusky County, Ohio. Ten years later the family moved to Fremont, in the same state, and thence successively to Clyde, Cleveland, Swanton, and White House. At different places the father filled responsible positions, having been postmaster at Clyde, route



"Excellent fare, moistened not unfrequently with choice wines, won his entire confidence, and talk he must."

agent between Cleveland and Toledo, and deputy United States marshal, holding the last position for six years. Early in the war, young Wales, then a mere lad, enlisted in the One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Ohio Infantry, serving for twenty months, most of the time as orderly to the colonel. After returning home, he found employment a few months as brakeman on the Toledo, Wabash, and Western Railroad, but,

finding the work disagreeable, threw up the situation, and, in company with his father, built a hotel and restaurant at White House.

November 15th, 1866, he was appointed by the post-office department route agent on the Lake Shore Road, and marrying shortly afterwards, located in Toledo. While thus employed, the eating-house burned down, and he used the insurance money to build a home in Toledo. In the year 1867, a line of railway post-offices was established between Buffalo and Toledo, Wales being promoted to a clerkship on the 17th of October, at an annual salary of twelve hundred dollars.

These positions, though laborious, are much sought after. A few months later, Mr. Reuben Harmon came on the road to learn the distribution, without an appointment or pay, but with a permit to ride in the mail-room, hoping in due time to be added to the list of the fortunate. Having no special aptitude for the work, and no claim on the regular appointees, Harmon progressed slowly, and was becoming discouraged, when he happened one day to drop into the car of Wales, who invited him to join their set, and volunteered to teach him the mysteries of the trade. The invitation was accepted, and the two got on swimmingly together, the good-natured patience of the old hand matching well with the docility of the new one, who improved so rapidly that he soon received from the department an appointment in the lowest grade of clerkships. They worked at the same table, and became fast friends.

At this time, according to the admissions of Wales, he was in the habit of stealing letters supposed to be valuable, having entered upon a course of dishonesty while running as route agent. He appropriated whatever money he found, but destroyed drafts, checks, and that class of securities. The other clerks knew nothing of these peculations, and there is no evidence that the thief was even suspected of criminal practices. With a change of administration came the removal of Wales, which took place June 10th, 1869, the unfortunate

explaining his downfall on the supposition that he "shot off his mouth too much."

From this time on Wales led a miscellaneous sort of life, roving from place to place, and changing rapidly from one employment to another. Destitute alike of fixed principles and settled habits, he occupied a position of unstable equilibrium, ready to topple into the arms of the first swindler who pressed temptation with suitable arguments. For a few months he ran as assistant conductor on the Lake Shore, and was then transferred for a while to the freight office at Toledo. From March till July, 1870, he kept a fruit and confectionery store in that city, and then began to travel about the country as an agent for the sale of baking-powders. In the fall he went to New York city, to seek a wider field. For a time he got on comfortably, selling on commission for two respectable houses engaged in different lines of trade. The arrangement, however, was brief, a quarrel soon breaking up the connection. Domestic trouble, also, long in brewing, now culminated, the victim of evil propensities being as unhappy in social as in business relations. Reproofs on the part of the wife provoked sullen rejoinders from the husband, till affection soured into hatred, and the breach became irreparable. Giving the furniture and a small sum of money to the wife, he started for St. Louis, going under an assumed name, with the view of abandoning her forever.

For a few days the wanderer found nothing to do and made no acquaintances, spending the time in loafing listlessly about places of public resort. To relieve the tedium he changed boarding-houses, and through the intervention of the new landlady became the room-mate of a stranger who introduced himself as R. L. Dudley. Mutual inquiries were interchanged in reference to personal histories, plans, and prospects. Wales could make but a sorry statement of the outlook. He had no business, and, what was worse, did not know where to hunt for any. Dudley, on the other hand, was cheerful and confident. He had just come from Cin-

cinnati, where he had been engaged in getting up a picture of the fountain and its surroundings. He proposed to return thither to solicit advertisements for the further adornment of this work of art, and then, if the consent of the captains could be secured, to place the lithographs, nicely framed, upon the various steamers plying on the Ohio and Mississippi. Lack of funds impeded the progress of the enterprise sadly. Printers and frame-makers might be put off with fair promises, but the credit system in the end greatly enhanced the cost of the work. It was suggested to Wales that he might like to put in some money and share the profits, and the proposition met a favorable response.

For the sake of convenience and economy they began to canvass for advertisements in St. Louis, after obtaining written permission from half a dozen captains to hang up the pictures on their boats. The work dragged heavily, to the speedy discouragement of the solicitors, other parties having exhausted the field, to say nothing of the patience of the merchants.

At this juncture a printer suggested that they could do much better by taking up the play-bills of Rankin and De Bar's theatres, and proposed to use his influence with the man who had charge of the publication to secure the job for them. The negotiation prospered, and a bargain was made, the new firm starting under the name of "Harry Norman & Co.,"—Wales being the Norman, and Dudley the Co. His aim in assuming a fictitious address was to conceal his movements from his wife. The two succeeded quite well in getting advertisements for the play-bills, but the innate rascality of the scamps would not permit them to deal squarely. Inferring from their own dishonest purposes that their employer intended "to beat" them, they determined to get the start in the game, and collecting what was due, "jumped" the town, leaving sundry debts to printers and others unpaid.

While in "business" together, the brace of worthies had frequent conversations, and were not long in coming to a

mutual understanding. Confidence evoked confidence, and little by little the secrets of the two lives were revealed. With limited facilities Dudley had contrived to pick up a precarious livelihood by a variety of small swindles, and had acquired some experience in shoving bogus drafts. The game was tried unsuccessfully on three of the banks in St. Louis, the respective cashiers not caring to buy eastern exchange of a stranger. Perhaps the papers had a suspicious appearance, being filled by comparative novices on ordinary blanks. At any rate, Dudley expressed the confident belief that there would be no serious trouble in collecting drafts of genuine origin by means of forged indorsements.

On the other hand, as if proud of the accomplishment, Wales explained that while running as mail-agent he had become expert in distinguishing letters which contained money and other valuable inclosures, boasting that the correctness of his judgment had often been proved by actual test.

"Have you any acquaintances still on the road?" inquired Dudley.

"Yes, lots of them," replied Wales; "and some very warm friends."

"Now, if you can manage," continued the tempter, "to pass over the line in the mail car, and obtain letters containing drafts, I can put them through, and we will divide the swag. It is the biggest thing out."

Already thoroughly demoralized, Wales did not need to be convinced by arguments or overcome by persuasion, but rushed into the scheme with the blind zeal of a madman. Visions of wealth and splendor glimmered in the near future. Why remain poor and despised when untold treasures could be won so easily? Others might be held back by silly scruples about honesty — not he.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
That, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

About the middle of April both started eastward, going as far as Cincinnati together. There they parted; Dudley proceeding, by way of Pittsburgh, to Buffalo, where his wife was then living, and Wales taking the line *via* Clyde, where he struck the Lake Shore. Visiting Harmon in the mail-car, he went to work, on the pretense of assisting in the distribution, and while so engaged, managed, without attracting the attention of the clerks, to secrete a large number of letters on his person. The money stolen, not being embraced in the articles of copartnership, he appropriated exclusively to his own use, but the negotiable paper was turned over to Dudley. The difficulties encountered in the various attempts to dispose of this lot have already been narrated. Dudley failed to be identified as C. H. Rugby in Albany, and in New York to impose on Mr. H. B. Clafin, in the character of a merchant from Rowley, Missouri. The four hundred and sixty dollars sponged from a clothing-house in Philadelphia little more than defrayed the expenses of the trip.

Dudley, however, was too apt a scholar in "ways that are dark and tricks that are vain," to stumble twice over the same obstacle. With the prosperous haul at Pittsburgh, where he passed under his real name and experienced no trouble in establishing his identity, terminated the period of probation. From that time on the confederates worked on a settled plan, and with appalling success. Dudley flitted from city to city, opening offices under various names for various ostensible purposes, with the sole object of becoming familiar with the attachés at the express offices, and of beguiling reputable men to vouch for his identity. When the preparations were complete, a letter would be sent to Wales, at White House, Ohio, over the address assumed for the occasion, directing him to report with a fresh installment of plunder.

The ex-postal clerk encountered no trouble whatever in executing the part assigned to him. Harmon, promoted to a head clerkship in 1871, remembered with gratitude the patient teachings of his former comrade. In fact, Wales was

a welcome visitor to all. About once a month he came to the car, finely dressed, sporting diamonds and a gold-headed cane, and plentifully supplied with choice brandy, whiskey, and cigars. Reminiscences, stories, and the bottle, all circulated freely. The guest assisted in the work with alacrity, improving favorable opportunities to stuff with letters pockets made expressly for the purpose. According to the testimony of Harmon, Wales was much more diligent as a volunteer than when actually employed in the service.

Sometimes Wales rode in the mail-room through to Buffalo, but generally, on pretense of seeking rest, retired to the sleeping-coach. The forged indorsements were usually in the handwriting of both. The proceeds of the drafts were shared equally.

Having secured one of the accomplices, special agent J. S. Elwell, on the part of the post-office department, and Pinkerton's agency on the part of Adams Express Company, continued the pursuit of the other with unabated vigor. Except from a few, the arrest of Wales was kept a profound secret for fear of alarming Dudley. It will be remembered that the two saw each other last at the Metropolitan Hotel, in New York city, immediately after the extraordinary raid on the National Express Company, at Troy. On paying the hotel bill, Dudley informed the clerk that he was going to Boston, and actually went to the depot with his wife on the time of the Boston train. Confidentially, however, he told Wales that he was going to Monroe, Michigan, a town between Toledo and Detroit, and that he had already purchased tickets over the Great Western. With a promise on the part of Dudley to write in about three weeks, the friends shook hands and parted.

One of Major Franklin's most skillful agents was detailed to follow on the trail of the fugitives. Several weeks had elapsed since the separation in New York city, and the track was comparatively cold. At Monroe, Michigan, he heard of them, but they had departed no one could tell whither. A

man and wife, traveling over crowded thoroughfares, ordinarily attract little attention, and in a few hours, or at most in a few days, all traces of them are obliterated. Fellow-passengers disperse in different directions to the ends of the earth. In the swelling tide of life, railway conductors do not remember individual faces. While hotel registers preserve the chirography of guests, a journey across the breadth of the continent may be accomplished continuously, so that a search through all the hostelries from Boston to San Francisco might prove labor lost, though the parties pursued had just traversed the entire distance. One may hide most effectually in the multitude.

The detective learned that Dudley and wife travelled with a canary-bird and wooden bandbox. By adroit and guarded inquiries he tracked them to Kalamazoo, to Jackson and Detroit, holding the hidden thread firmly in hand. At every stage of the pursuit unavoidable delays occurred, so that the fugitives, though little dreaming that keen-scented danger dogged their heels, easily kept several weeks ahead. At Detroit, the detective crossed the St. Clair River, and, by means of the canary-bird and wooden bandbox, followed the clue to the Grand Trunk depot, and thence to Montreal, conductors, hackmen, and station agents at different points furnishing the requisite information.

At Montreal, the thread which had led the way prosperously through wide wanderings suddenly snapped asunder, and the end could not be recovered again, the canary-bird and wooden bandbox disappearing from the horizon of the operative. No one could give any account of the exit of the oddly freighted couple.

Toward the close of April, the officers engaged on the case became satisfied that Dudley was hiding in Boston, or one of the adjacent villages. A suspicious character stopping temporarily at Salem was placed under close surveillance, on the supposition that he was the man. The identification was the more difficult as very few people knew the forger by sight.

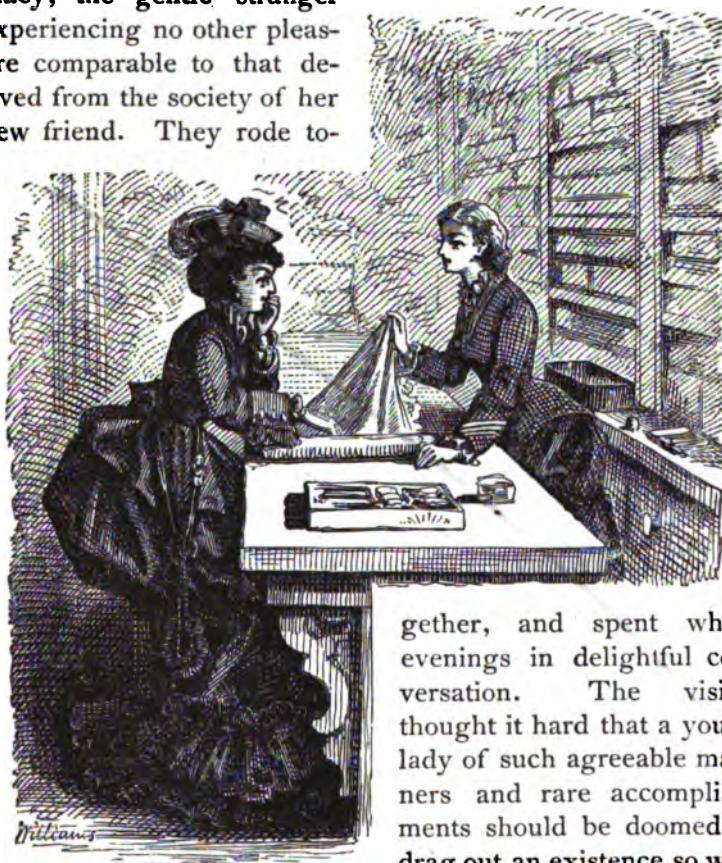
To meet this trouble, special agent Elwell solicited the aid of Mr. I. F. Loomis, general agent of the Charter Oak Life Insurance Company, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who countersigned a policy for Dudley in 1869, and kept up a partial acquaintance with him afterwards. Mr. Loomis, believing that the public interest required the sacrifice of individual preferences, reluctantly consented to assist, and started eastward April 26th, expecting at the time to be detained from home but a few days. He went to Salem, and, after taking a good look at the supposed forger, was compelled to inform the detectives that they were watching the wrong man. Although gravely disappointed, they still held to the belief that he was lurking somewhere not far away, and that time and perseverance would discover the haunt.

For many days the officers, accompanied by Mr. Loomis, explored the labyrinthine streets of Boston, and canvassed the beautiful suburban villages encircling the city. Theatres, concert saloons, beer gardens, and other places of resort, were "wearied with inquest of beseeching looks," in the vain hope of ending by a lucky hit the prolonged and provoking chase. If the man of many *aliases* appeared abroad, they were not fortunate enough to encounter him; nor could they find the slightest clue to his retreat.

It was obvious, too, that, though unaware of his captivity, Dudley had resolved to hold no further communication with Wales, fearing danger from his recklessness and garrulity. At all events, correspondence by mail ceased entirely. Had no trouble arisen, he might perhaps, after a while, have renewed the intimacy; but, for the present at least, he was evidently taking counsel of his fears.

Meanwhile the exhaustless ingenuity of Major Pinkerton, and of his able corps of superintendents, devised scheme after scheme for the discovery of the perplexing secret. The family of Mrs. Dudley resided at Allegheny City, a sister being employed as clerk in a store at Pittsburgh. A female detective, of talents and address, was detailed by Major Pin-

kerton to cultivate the acquaintance of this young lady. Appearing on the scene of action, she visited the store, and made numerous purchases, always dealing with Miss Adelaide, and paying great deference to her judgment. The acquaintance begun across the counter soon ripened into intimacy, the gentle stranger experiencing no other pleasure comparable to that derived from the society of her new friend. They rode to-



"She visited the store, and made numerous purchases, always dealing with Miss Adelaide."

had under consideration various plans for transferring her to a more congenial sphere. It was not unnatural that the

gather, and spent whole evenings in delightful conversation. The visitor thought it hard that a young lady of such agreeable manners and rare accomplishments should be doomed to drag out an existence so well fitted for more elevated pursuits, in measuring ribbons for querulous customers, and

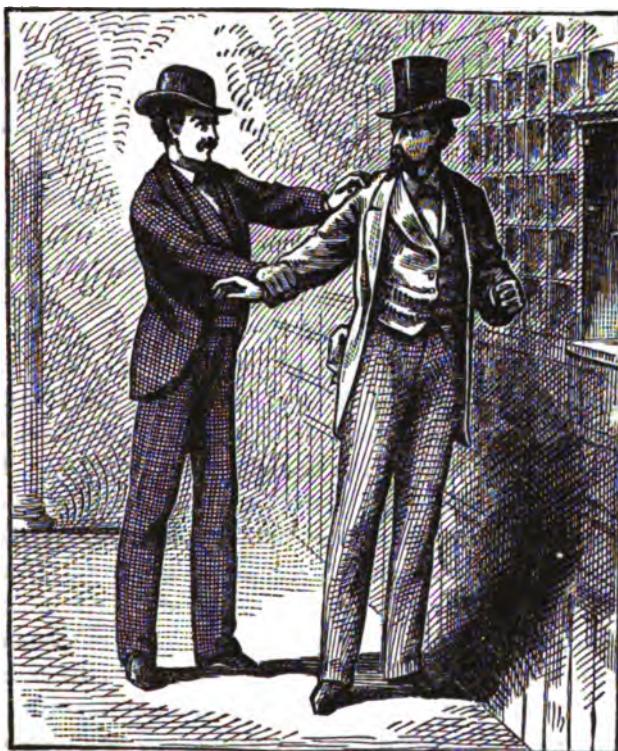
interest manifested for the welfare of the young lady should expand so as to embrace within its circumference the other members of the family. About most of them Miss Adelaide conversed freely; but when reference, however guarded, was made to the absent sister, she wrapped herself in an armor of impenetrable reserve, dropping a single word only that threw the slightest light upon the mystery. In a moment of unusual confidence she divulged the fact that her sister was living somewhere near Boston, but the most adroit turns of conversation, at instants of the most self-revealing intimacy, failed to surprise her into any additional disclosure.

Overmatched by the "close-mouthed" yet unsuspecting girl, the friend planned a final piece of strategy. She gave out that she intended to make a trip through New England, embracing Boston in the route, and offered, if Miss Adelaide would go as a companion, to bear all the expenses of the journey. This device failed with the rest, the young lady gently, but firmly, declining the invitation. Driven to her wits' end, on the eve of departure she sought Miss Adelaide for the final adieu, and, taking from her pocket a pencil and memorandum-book, requested her to write down the address of her sister, as it would give her great pleasure to form her acquaintance, provided she remained long enough in Boston to permit her to call. "I should be happy to," replied Miss Adelaide, "but I do not know it myself. Sister rarely writes, and is very uncommunicative about particulars." Baffled at every point by a vigilance that never slept, the detective gave up the job in despair.

No sooner, however, was one line of operations abandoned than another was adopted, the fertility and expedients of Major Pinkerton and his aids growing with the emergency. Once more Miss Adelaide was selected as the instrument to be played upon. A bogus telegram was concocted announcing that Robert had met with a dangerous accident, and urging the sister to come on immediately. Meanwhile she was to telegraph to the old address. The dispatch, signed

"Ett—" — the familiar abbreviation of Mrs. Dudley's name, — was sent to Miss Adelaide at her home.

Of course, the subsequent movements of the recipient were closely watched. She neither made preparations for the journey nor answered by telegraph ; but, after deliberating a day or two, indited a letter, which she deposited in the mail-



"Collaring the miscreant, with an air of triumph . . ."

ing box at the post-office in person. The address was immediately examined, and found to be, "Mrs. E. H. Purcell, Boston, Massachusetts." The facts were communicated by telegraph to the operatives in that city. In due time the fateful missive arrived and was advertised. By means of a string, arranged for the purpose, the delivery clerk was to

promptly notify Mr. Corson whenever the letter should be called for. After several days, passed in a state of eager expectancy, at length, on the 31st of May, the man of many *aliases* sauntered up to the general delivery and inquired for "E. H. Purcell." The clerk, unobserved, gave a nervous pull at the string, and proceeded to examine the package taken from the proper pigeon-hole. In an instant Mr. Corson stood beside the criminal, whom he had pursued for many months and across half the breadth of the continent, never losing courage even where the trail grew faintest. Collaring the miscreant, with an air of triumph he led him up stairs to the office of special agent Charles Field, remarking, as he entered, to Messrs. Field and Elwell, "This is our man. This is Robert L. Dudley."

The gentleman thus abruptly introduced replied, with the utmost composure and self-assurance, "You are mistaken; my name is not Dudley; it is Rathburn."

"It is too late now to deny the truth," interposed Elwell. "We have tracked you to Albany, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Rochester, and other places, and now we have driven you into your last hole. It is needless to lie further. Do not pile up falsehoods on crimes sufficiently numerous already."

"I assure you, on the honor of a gentleman," replied the prisoner, unabashed, "that there is a great mistake here somewhere. My name is not Dudley, and I have never been in Pittsburgh or Buffalo. You have got the wrong man."

While the conversation was in progress, Mr. Loomis came in, and, immediately recognizing the familiar features of his old acquaintance, saluted him by name. The prisoner still denied his identity, when Loomis, dropping on the sofa beside him, and slapping him on the knee, quoted the nib of a comic story which Dudley had often told in the office of the insurance agent at Pittsburgh.

The humor of the joke impressed Dudley irresistibly. Breaking into a hearty laugh, he said, "Boys, you have got me. I give it up. But I gave you a lively chase, didn't I?"

With that he repeated for the benefit of the company the story which had so provoked his risibles. All joined in the merriment, and for the nonce one might have mistaken the conclave for a reunion of old friends, so jolly was the crowd. "Let him laugh who wins," is a text that could certainly have been quoted by the heroes of the long chase in justification of their hilarity.

"Though losses and crosses
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where."

Dudley now talked incessantly, as pent-up waters pour over a broken dam. "Whither do you propose to take me," he inquired, "and by what authority?"

"We have a United States warrant for your arrest," answered Mr. Elwell, "issued from the western district of Pennsylvania. You will be taken to Pittsburgh."

Turning to Mr. Loomis, he continued: "Tell me all about Pittsburgh. Did the Adams Express Company lose the money, or Mr. Snively, the agent?" As the conversation progressed, he acknowledged that he was Randall in Newark, Cone in Philadelphia, and Bogart in Buffalo. "By the way," continued he, "I talked in a Methodist Sunday-school in Buffalo, and didn't get out of there a day too soon. It was growing hot about the time I showed that village a clean pair of heels."

Dudley begged to be allowed to see his wife before starting on the journey, which promised to be a long and momentous one, and informed the officers that she was at Mattapan, seven or eight miles distant. The request was granted, Messrs. Elwell, Loomis, and Corson accompanying the prisoner in a carriage.

The house proved to be a nice little cottage on a by-street, elegantly furnished throughout. It nestled innocently among the rocks, as if crimes and criminals were unknown to its

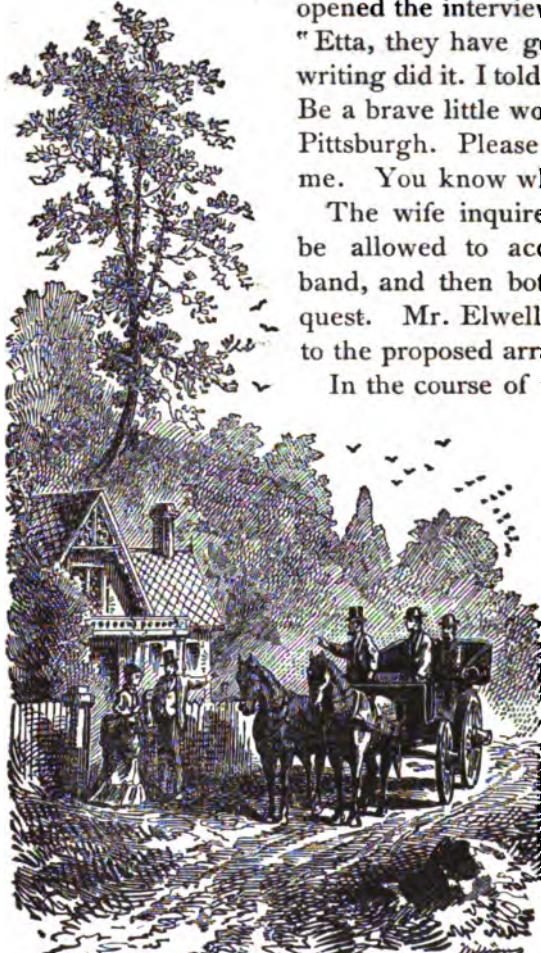
inclosures. When the party drove up to the door, Dudley, not being permitted to alight, called his wife to the carriage and

opened the interview with the remark, "Etta, they have got me. The letter-writing did it. I told you so. Do not cry. Be a brave little woman. I must go to Pittsburgh. Please pack my satchel for me. You know what I shall need."

The wife inquired if she could not be allowed to accompany her husband, and then both joined in the request. Mr. Elwell made no objection to the proposed arrangement.

In the course of the interview, Mrs.

Dudley was informed that the money and bonds concealed on her person must be given up, or search would be made for them. At first she denied possession of the securities. Dudley, however, conceived some obscure plan for retaining the property by transfer to a friend, and said to Mr. Elwell that he wished to speak.



The country Home of Dudley.

to Mr. Loomis privately. That gentleman, who was then walking about outside, was invited to take a seat in the carriage beside the prisoner, when the latter requested him to take charge of the papers, bonds, money, &c., for the

benefit of his wife, remarking to Mr. Elwell, by way of explanation, "I have known Mr. Loomis a long time, and know he is all right. I prefer to have him take charge of my wife's property."

Recalling Mrs. Dudley to the door of the carriage, he then said, "Etta, this is Mr. Loomis, of Pittsburgh. I know him to be a first-rate man. Now I want you to give him the money and bonds which you have in your bosom, and all the papers, which he will keep for you."

Without further hesitation, she turned over to Mr. Loomis the property, embracing three thousand dollars in six per cent. bonds; two thousand dollars in other bonds; two fifty dollar bills; two five hundred dollar notes; two promissory notes of two hundred; the deed of the house at Mattapan, and a lot of receipts. He wrote for her a paper enumerating the various securities committed to him. In a day or two, however, the Adams Express Company obtained possession of them by legal process, as partial indemnity for their losses by the forgeries.

Mr. Elwell drove back to the city with the prisoner, leaving Mr. Corson to accompany Mrs. Dudley at her convenience. They rode in, later in the day, by rail, and, according to previous arrangement, went to the Sherman House.

On arriving at the post-office in Boston, Mr. Elwell met special agent Field and a deputy United States marshal, who had warrants for the arrest of both Robert L. Dudley and Etta Dudley, his wife. The warrant was duly served upon the husband, who was taken to jail. It was decided, however, not to arrest the wife, at least for the time, or to place her under duress of any kind. Mr. Elwell particularly requested the clerk of the hotel to give her a pleasant room on the first floor, and asked the housekeeper, a sister of the proprietor, to spare no attention or effort to make her stay as agreeable as the circumstances of the case would permit. Mr. Elwell distinctly informed Mrs. Dudley that

she was not under arrest, and probably would not be — that she was free to go and come as she pleased. Her door was never locked except by herself, nor was the room guarded in the slightest degree by any of the party. She had the freedom of the house and of the town, passing in and out at her own sweet will.

On Monday, June 2d, the case of Dudley came up before Judge Lowell for a preliminary hearing, but on account of the funeral of the United States district attorney, the examination was postponed till the 3d. Meanwhile the counsel of Dudley called at the hotel and took away Mrs. Dudley with all her effects, forgetting nothing but the payment of her bill. On the 3d the judge ordered that the United States marshal for Massachusetts should convey the prisoner to the marshal for the western district of Pennsylvania.

As Mr. Elwell was leaving the court-room, a deputy sheriff of Suffolk County called him by name, and said he had a warrant for his arrest. "Very well," replied the agent, "let me see the paper;" whereupon that functionary exhibited one of the most extraordinary documents ever contrived under the guise of law to forward the ends of villainy. In the name of the commonwealth of Massachusetts the sheriff is commanded "to attach the goods or estate of J. S. Elwell, J. W. Corson, otherwise called Thomas, Israel F. Loomis, — Wilkinson, — Bangs, to the value of ten thousand dollars, and for want thereof to take the bodies of the said defendants," to answer on the first Tuesday of July, in the city of Boston, to Robert L. Dudley, and Steveta H., his wife, in an action of tort. The wrongs of the unhappy client are thus set forth: —

"And the plaintiffs say the defendants on the thirty-first day of May last with force and arms assaulted the female plaintiff at said Boston, and with force and violence laid hold of the said female plaintiff, and then and there pulled about the said female plaintiff, and otherwise greatly hurt and injured her, and put her in great bodily fear, so that she

became and was sick and disordered, and has since so continued, all to the manifest wrong and injury of the plaintiffs in the premises, and to their great damage, to wit, in the sum of ten thousand dollars.

"And the plaintiffs further say that the said defendants . . . compelled the said female plaintiff to go from and out of a certain dwelling-house, situated and being in said Boston, into the public streets there, and then and there forced and compelled her to go in and along divers public streets to a certain hotel in said Boston, called the Sherman House, and then and there imprisoned the said female plaintiff, and kept and detained her imprisoned there, without any authority whatsoever, for a long space of time, to wit, until the afternoon of June 2d, inst., contrary to the laws of this commonwealth, and against the will of the said plaintiffs, or either of them, whereby the said female plaintiff was not only greatly hurt and injured in body, but was also thereby, as was also the other plaintiff, greatly injured and exposed in her reputation and circumstances, to great damage and loss as aforesaid."

The accompanying oath was made June 3d, by Stevetta H. Dudley.

Proceeding to the office of the sheriff, Mr. Elwell was informed that he would be required to give bonds in the sum of ten thousand dollars, with two sureties, each to qualify in the full amount. Special agent Field and postmaster Burt volunteered to sign the bond, after urging in vain that Mr. Elwell, as an officer of the government engaged in the performance of his duties, and as in all respects an honorable gentleman, should be released on his personal assurance to return and answer in the suit that had been brought against him. The lawyer of the Dudleys, however, chagrined at his failure to secure the release of his client, or even a reduction of his bail, having perpetrated the marvelous romance recited above and secured the arrest of the special agent, determined to push the policy of harshness uncom-

promisingly to the end. The proper officer, however, accepted the bond as offered, notwithstanding additional objections from the attorney. After remaining in "durance vile" about four hours, Mr. Elwell was released.

If further annoyances were intended, they were probably checked by the determined attitude of the post-office department, as indicated by the following telegram:—

"WASHINGTON, D. C., June 4, 1873.

"POSTMASTER BURT, BOSTON: Stand by Elwell in the Dudley case. Advise me what is necessary, and I will see the attorney general in regard to it immediately.

(Signed)

"J. A. J. CRESWELL,

"Postmaster General."

The statement sworn to by Mrs. Dudley was a fiction from beginning to end. Mr. Elwell never arrested her, or made any representations intended to convey that impression. He never detained her for a moment, or attempted in the slightest degree to restrain her actions. In regard to the bodily hurts, estimated at ten thousand dollars in the currency of the realm, he never touched her person except to render her aid, as in assisting her to or from the carriage. She not only came voluntarily to the city, but solicited the privilege of doing so.

Special agents in the performance of unpleasant duties before the courts, expect to encounter at the hands of shyster lawyers who disport on the outer fringes of the profession, a great deal of insolence, and bullying, and blackguardism. By a force as resistless as gravitation, thieves instinctively resort to that class for counsel and support. Even the worst of criminals have a right to be tried under the forms of law and according to the rules of evidence; but this does not carry the counter right to assail, with false and villainous charges, faithful officers engaged laboriously and devotedly in protecting the dearest interests of society. Robbers and

cutthroats, swindlers and forgers, will always find tools to do their bidding, but, fortunately, it is not often that they succeed in retaliating with imprisonment upon the vigilance which has wrought their capture.

The opportunity for the perpetration of the outrage was made possible by the death, a few days before, of the United States district attorney, the office having been left in charge of a mere lad who lacked the experience to cope with older and more wily antagonists.

On the evening of June 5th, the marshal started for Pittsburgh with the prisoner, Mrs. Dudley accompanying the party by permission. On the 7th he was turned over to the marshal for the western district of Pennsylvania, and immediately committed. Wales arrived from Philadelphia the next day, and shared the same treatment.

On the arrival of Dudley in Pittsburgh, great curiosity was manifested to see and to converse with him. He had been a former resident of the city. It was here, or in the immediate vicinity, that he married; and here also that he cheated the express company, and consummated one of the most daring in the series of forgeries. Could all the facts be known, perhaps it would be seen that some in the motley crowd who gathered to gaze upon the prisoner had a more intimate acquaintance with his earlier feats of swindling than they would care to admit in so public a place. The companions of three or four years before hardly foresaw that the habit of living by sharp practices would end by living in a prison.

During the day Dudley appeared as gay and jocund as if he had returned on a tour of pleasure to renew old acquaintances and make new ones. At the hotel and in the court-room he wore an air of self-assurance and unconcern more befitting a casual spectator than the central figure of the show. Cool, cunning, and audacious, he played boldly for heavy stakes, and, having lost the game, accepted the penalty as a matter of course.

On the 1st of July eleven true bills were found against the

prisoners by the United States grand jury sitting at Williamsport; namely, one against Wales and Dudley jointly, for conspiracy; four against Wales for stealing letters and drafts from the mail; three against Dudley as accessory after the fact; and three against Dudley for receiving drafts stolen from the mail; also one against Mrs. Steveta H. Dudley as accessory after the fact.

Mr. Elwell having been prostrated by dangerous and prolonged illness soon after the capture of Dudley, special agent U. R. Hawley, of Chicago, who was familiar with the facts, and had rendered valuable aid in hunting down the criminals, collected the evidence and the witnesses for the trial, which took place at Pittsburgh in November.

Both prisoners were first tried on a joint indictment for conspiracy to rob the United States mails, this being the test case upon which all the evidence was adduced. The late Hon. H. B. Swope, United States district attorney, conducted the prosecution. On the third day the jury returned a verdict of guilty, the penalty for the offense being imprisonment for two years.

Wales was then convicted of stealing the Washburn draft, and Dudley as accessory after the fact. The penalty in each case was imprisonment for five years. Believing that the other cases ought to be tried in the districts where the several drafts were negotiated, the district attorney did not wish to urge a conviction upon the remaining indictments, but proposed to have the prisoners removed for further trials to districts where convictions would be legal. They, however, waiving the question of jurisdiction, pleaded guilty to a third indictment, and were sentenced to an aggregate imprisonment of seven years each. The case against Mrs. Dudley was dropped.

A TRICKSTER TRICKED.



"I want to get out!"

THE fall of John Middleton from the sunny heights of renown was broken by a brief lodgment on an obscure peg in the postal service. Though still a young man, he had enjoyed a varied experience, and, like many others traveling the downward road from better days, affected to hold in supreme contempt the humble position which now supplied him with bread. Sharp, reticent, unprincipled, and an adept in trickery and chicanery, he found in the lower strata of frontier politics a field well suited to

the exercise of his gifts,

and early began to look forward to high preferment as within easy reach of talents like his. But, as often happens where advancement is sought at the expense of virtue, dissipation with its concomitant vices grew so much more rapidly than honors, that he was unhorsed by bad habits near the outset of the race.

Before reaching thirty, Middleton had managed a number of jobs in the legislative lobby; had made several visits to Washington to represent the interests of sundry bands of philanthropists whose hearts burned to supervise the distribution among the Indians of the bounties of a paternal government; had made the acquaintance of half the magnates at the national capital, and had learned the failings and foibles of the weaker vessels who are disposed to regard the public treasury as a happy contrivance for the relief of impecunious patriots. For four years he was chief deputy United States marshal for one of the western states, and afterwards filled a similar position in one of the territories, having virtual control of the office, as his principal was a sot who paid no attention to the business. At odd intervals he also attended to the "still work" around two or three Indian agencies.

The drunken marshal at length died, and was succeeded by a sober man who turned Middleton adrift. Now Middleton, in the days of his splendor, had wonderful facility for making money, but his habits were very expensive; so that when the tide turned, his pockets were empty. Governor Halford, upon whom he had some mysterious claim, then took him in as private secretary,—a position he was well qualified to fill, as he had talents, experience, and literary capacity,—but his bad habits had now become so inveterate that the governor was constrained to look about for means of getting rid of him. Accordingly the wires clicked and clicked back again, and the deed was done, Middleton receiving an appointment as mail messenger on the road from Wilna to Tilsit, a distance of sixty miles. Like many other frauds foisted as pensioners on the revenues of the department, he was to have no keys, but was to ride in the little room set apart for the storage of two or three pouches, tell stories, drink whiskey, and settle the affairs of the nation, in conjunction with other traveling politicians as worthy of confidence as himself. The ostensible business of the messenger was "to guard" the mails, and that was all, the office being of course entirely unneces-

sary except as a means of livelihood for a vagabond who had fallen so low that he could no longer earn his subsistence in the legitimate pursuits of business.

Special agent Furay happening to travel that way, and feeling outraged at the imposition practiced on the government, informed the messenger that the mails must be distributed, or the place would be discontinued ; but Middleton laughed him to scorn, relying with absolute confidence upon the impregnability of his fortifications. However, the keys were sent for and came ; but the messenger thrust them into his pocket, and said nothing, having resolved not to soil his dignity by "throwing" letters for Furay or any other man.

As a sworn employé of the department, Middleton had free access to the terminal offices, neither postmaster knowing that he was provided with a key. Both were money-order offices, and it was the custom of Wilna to remit all surplus funds every Monday by registered letter, directed to the postmaster at Tilsit. The train started from the latter place in the morning, and, remaining about an hour at Wilna, returned in the afternoon.

While lounging around, Middleton had often seen the postmaster at Wilna inclose large sums in such letters. The packages were uniformly placed in the through pouch, which it was his special business to guard on the road. Having become familiar with the routine, and duly reflected on the rules of evidence, the fellow concluded that here was a rich placer on which he could raid with impunity. He saw no way in which the robbery could be legally proved, and for mere suspicion he cared not a straw.

The plan rapidly took shape, and it was not long before the experiment was tried. Within three weeks after the receipt of the key, the only package which left one Monday morning was stolen. To avert suspicion, the messenger kept away from the office on the occasion, coming up only with the mail wagon just before the departure of the return train. "Under the circumstances, how was he to know," he triumphantly

inquired, "what was in the pouch?" On this particular Monday the postmaster was too busy to go out and hunt up large bills, and hence deferred the remittance of the surplus money-order funds. It so happened that there was but one registered package in the pouch. This was directed to the postmaster at Tilsit, and would naturally be mistaken for one of the rich *douceurs* which had excited the cupidity of the dishonest messenger. The letter, however, was mailed by a citizen, and contained but ten dollars. It was stolen on the road.

The next day the postmaster at Wilna did remit his surplus, amounting to five hundred and fifty dollars, in a five hundred dollar treasury note, and five ten-dollar bills, all new, of the Scandinavian National Bank of Chicago, which had recently been established, and was then putting its fresh currency in circulation. Each note was fully described on the circular provided for the purpose, the original being transmitted with the money, and a duplicate retained at the office of mailing. The package, however, shared the fate of its more humble predecessor of the previous day. Great was the consternation when it was learned that two registered letters had been stolen on two consecutive days. The postmasters at Wilna and Tilsit, the marshal of the territory, and Middleton, wrote to special agent Furay, and they all also wrote or telegraphed to the department, which in turn forwarded the communications to the same officer. He was then absent from home, working up a case at a long distance from his base of supplies, and of course knew nothing of this fearful clamor for his presence and aid. On returning, ten days later, his wife ran to the cars to meet him, and thrusting a package of papers into his hands, ejaculated, excitedly, "O, John! — big robbery! — Tilsit! — quick!"

The train was moving away, but, seizing the bundle, he hurried after it, and succeeded in getting aboard, after a desperate race, reaching Tilsit at midnight.

The next morning he began the investigation in earnest, going over the ground prudently, coolly, and carefully, seeing

the parties interested, and listening critically to their stories. The farther he penetrated into the case the more thorough became his conviction that Middleton was the thief; yet there was no crucial fact that fastened the guilt upon him absolutely. Possibly the package was never placed in the pouch. Possibly it went through safely and was appropriated at Tilsit. Enough of doubt hung over its fate at each end of the route to



"O, John! — big robbery! — Tilsit! quick!"

save the messenger from criminal prosecution. The opinion of a skilled detective is often unerringly correct, though based on shreds of evidence that fall far short of legal proof. In this instance the thief, from long familiarity with the rules of law, believed there was no possible way in which the hand of justice could reach him. Yet for a man of the world, who had navigated safely through many perils, he now exhibited unaccountable solicitude to have "the thing hunted up," as otherwise he must be left to share suspicion with others.

The obvious point in the investigation was to learn if the robber had spent any of the stolen bills, and if so, to find out whether they could in any way be traced back to him. A quiet search was instituted in the towns at each end of the road, but without success. The detective then visited Hartwell, a village thirty miles beyond Wilna, where the wife of the messenger resided, and after examining all the cash in the stores, failed to discover either of the missing notes. Meanwhile the arrival of the officer in the territory had become generally known, and as he had recently effected several extraordinary arrests, public expectation was excited to the point where it demanded the most unreasonable results. At ordinary times this extravagant confidence might have flattered his vanity, but now it served only to augment the annoyances of the situation, as professional pride dislikes to admit that its accomplishments must, in all likelihood, fall far short of the popular requirement. For five days he worked and studied uninterruptedly, and as a reward for all this toil of body and mind, had not yet discovered the first clue to connect Middleton with the crime, though still entertaining not the slightest doubt of his guilt.

Under the most dexterous handling, the chances of bluffing a confession out of the ex-deputy marshal seemed exceedingly slim, as he knew all the tricks of the trade, having often practiced them himself. He had obviously studied the case, too, in all its bearings, and was prepared to meet attacks at all points.

The genius of the detective, however, rose to the level of the emergency. Middleton, as he knew, was always "hard up," and constitutionally unable to hold on to money. Hence it was safe to infer that he had spent a part if not the whole of the proceeds of the robbery. Guided by such reasoning, he hit upon a device which crushed the inveterate trickster, and laid the truth bare.

Going to the bank, he procured two perfectly new ten-dollar bills of the "Scandinavian Bank of Chicago." Pro-

ceeding thence to his private room at the hotel, he drew forth the duplicate circular, describing the lost notes, and made, on an ordinary sheet of paper, what purported to be a correct copy of it, and which was a correct copy, except that in the place of the second and fifth of the ten-dollar bills actually stolen, he substituted a description of the two which had just come into his hands. He knew that Middleton had seen the retained list several times at the post-office, but did not think he had copied it, or that he would be able to iden-



"Please copy this list in your own hand, on one of the regular blanks."

tify either of the notes, except, perhaps, the one for five hundred dollars, if confronted with them. On arriving at Wilna, the detective took the sheet away, and now intended to keep it out of sight.

Having fixed up the paper to suit his purposes, he sauntered carelessly over to the office, and taking the postmaster aside, said confidentially, "Here is a rough copy in my writ-

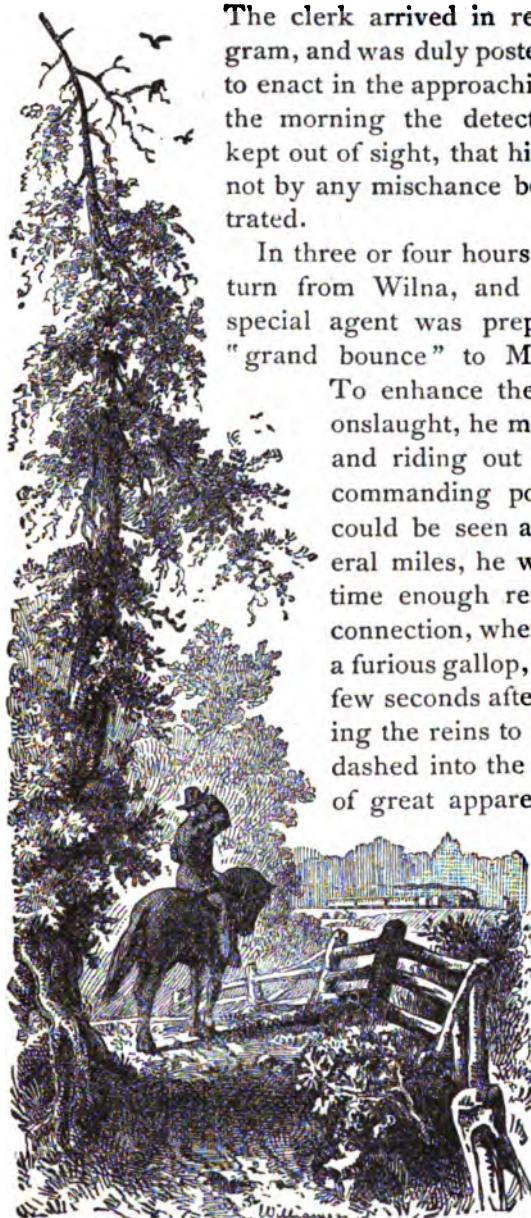
ing of the duplicate description of the stolen money which you gave me several days ago. That sheet I haven't with me, and I may need it soon. Please copy this list in your own hand on one of the regular blanks."

The postmaster sat down at once and complied with the request. He had not charged his memory with the numbers of the bills, recollecting only that the tens were all new, and on the Scandinavian Bank of Chicago. If shown, the next day, the two lists made out by himself, he could not have told which was the genuine one. For prudential reasons the detective did not let him into the secret, and if this page should ever pass under his eye, it will inform him for the first time of the part he once inadvertently played in bringing a hardened criminal to justice.'

Meantime Middleton manifested extreme anxiety to keep informed of the movements of Furay; and that officer, with the view of inspiring him with a vague and misty but terrible dread of danger from some mysterious quarter, instructed two or three trusty men, whom the fellow was certain to question, to report him as almost simultaneously present at widely distant places. Though seeing no possible way in which he could be caught, the culprit was fast losing his customary mental equilibrium through the distraction produced by the extraordinary and inexplicable flights of the detective, whose celerity seemed to surpass the swiftness of the eagle. A guilty conscience, under the play of its own fears, often reaches a state of apprehension where it looks for lightning from a clear sky.

Armed with the altered description, the officer proceeded to Ceylon, an important station on the line of the road, and telegraphed the postmaster at Tilsit to send up a clerk, who was to get off at that place and ask no questions.

The next morning, as the train passed Ceylon on the way west, Middleton inquired anxiously where Furay was, and was told by the local agent, whose information was furnished for the occasion, that he left the night before on horseback.



The clerk arrived in response to the telegram, and was duly posted in the part he was to enact in the approaching drama. During the morning the detective had studiously kept out of sight, that his little game might not by any mischance be exposed and frustrated.

In three or four hours the train would return from Wilna, and on its arrival the special agent was prepared to apply the "grand bounce" to Mr. John Middleton.

To enhance the effectiveness of the onslaught, he mounted a fleet horse, and riding out of the village to a commanding point, where the cars could be seen at a distance of several miles, he waited till just about time enough remained for a close connection, when he started back on a furious gallop, reaching the depot a few seconds after the train. Throwing the reins to an acquaintance, he dashed into the mail-room in a state of great apparent excitement, and,

pretending to wipe the perspiration from his face, as if overheated by the exercise of a long, hard ride, he inquired, impatiently, "John Middleton, where is your mail-key?"

Too surprised to answer, the mes-

senger stood as immovable and speechless as a statue, when the question was repeated in a tone so imperious and peremptory, that it seemed to preclude the possibility of further temporizing. To any one else he would probably have denied the possession of a key, but knowing that a lie of that sort would avail nothing in the present instance, he replied, "It is here," producing a string from his pocket.

Taking it from the ring, the special agent handed it to the clerk from Tilsit, with instructions "To take charge of the mails on that road till otherwise ordered." Turning to the messenger, he then said, "Middleton, come with me."

"Isn't this rather an unceremonious proceeding?" queried that worthy, with the coolness of an Arctic iceberg.

"Perhaps so," answered the officer; "railroad trains don't wait for ceremony, and I am in a hurry. Come, there is no time to be lost."

"You know, I presume, what you are doing," replied the messenger defensively.

"Yes; you need borrow no uneasiness on that score, Mr. Middleton. I do know what I am about, and can assure you that I am doing right well."

The train was about to move, and the messenger still seemed exceedingly averse to quitting his cosy quarters for the cold world outside. The detective took him by the arm, and they hurried off together.

The crowd now piled across the platforms of the cars, manifesting great curiosity, but keeping at a respectful distance. No event since the organization of the territory had produced so much popular excitement as the late robbery, and, in addition to the citizens of the place, the large numbers then in attendance on the United States court at Ceylon were all on the alert to see "what Furay was going to do about it." With a vague though exalted appreciation of what were supposed to be his mystical gifts, they could not see exactly where or how an entrance was to be made to the heart of this carefully planned affair.

They walked in silence to the private room of the detective in the hotel. The messenger in every look and action manifested great uneasiness and anxiety, evidently wondering whether the keen-scented hound of the law had really struck a decisive trail. Reason assured him that he was safe, but the apprehension born of guilt and perplexity, suggested that after all, reason might be wrong. After the door had closed upon them, the detective began, "Mr. Middleton, you deserve a better fate than this, and God knows I am sorry, very sorry, that your crime and my duties have created our present relations. Middleton, I have worked hard. When I started on this case, little did I foresee that the cross would fall on you. But I may as well tell you at once, for we understand each other, and it is needless to waste words, I've got you dead."

"Well, if you have," replied the messenger, "let me see it. I don't propose to take anything on trust. If you've got me dead, show your hand."

"I shall be happy to accommodate you in every particular," answered the special agent, pulling from one pocket the revised description of the stolen money, and from another two ten-dollar bills, each wrapped up separately, and labeled with elaborate care. On the reverse side of both were several hieroglyphics which struck the attention of the robber without special effort on the part of the exhibitor. He would not have turned so pale had he known that the cabalistic marks were made a few hours before by the detective himself. Spreading out the description deliberately, the officer continued: "You know that paper, I presume. Well, let us see whether I have got you or not. Compare this note with the second entry in the list of tens. Now compare this with the fifth."

A pair of uneasy eyes glanced hurriedly from the notes to the description, and back again from the description to the notes. There could be no mistake. The correspondence was exact. The fellow turned the bills over, but asked no

explanation of the marks, having evidently already discovered far more than it was comfortable to know.

Then, in a tone of subdued, melancholy triumph, the officer broke in upon his meditations, "You don't think I have got you, Jack?"

With an oath, he replied, "Furay, it looks so."

"Middleton, what demon has taken possession of you? How did you win your own consent to do this terrible wrong?"

In silence the man who had passed, unscathed by the law, through many dark transactions, squinted with a furtive leer out of his schooled and practiced eye, trying to discover whether the detective really had all the evidence which he seemed to have, or was attempting to play a trick on him as he had often done on others. After deliberating apparently about the propriety of answering, he inquired abruptly, "Furay, where did you get those bills?"

"Why, Jack, if you want to know very badly, you had better ask one of the Schimmerhorn boys. It is enough for you to know that I have them. But why did you do it? Was you crazy with drink, or what?"

"Well, Furay, I'll tell you. I have been drinking and gambling. Since I came to this territory, everything has gone against me. Nothing that I have touched has turned out well. Do you wonder that I grew so desperate as not to care much what might happen to me? I did not see how under heaven I could ever be trapped in this operation, and so took the risk. But my bad luck clung to me, and here is the result. Perhaps it is just as well, anyhow. I ask you again, Furay, where did you get those bills?"

"I told you, Jack, it is sufficient for you to know that I have them. They are here. John Middleton, it is enough to make angels weep to see a man of your talents and opportunities fall as you have fallen. How could you betray the confidence of the governor, and of the friends who have sustained you from childhood? How could you bring dishonor upon wife and children?"

"You have been connected with courts a long time. The ways of justice have no secrets that are hidden from you. We have known each other for years, and you are well aware that it is not my habit to fire blank cartridges, or waste my shot. Now, Jack, I am going to be candid with you. Having shown you what I have, I am going to admit what I have not. Frankly I do not know what you did with that five hundred dollar note. Whatever knowledge I may have of the rest, I have been unable to find any trace of that. You are sufficiently familiar with courts and with the penalties meted out to poor unfortunates, situated as you are now, to know that the easiest way out of trouble is the best way. Come, where is that note?"

"Let us understand each other, Furay. I want to see the exact point in your suggestion. How will it benefit me to tell where that note is?"

"Jack, you stole that bill out of a letter intrusted to your charge, and if you deny the act, I propose to prove it before twelve men. I appeal to your experience to decide whether it is better to acknowledge your folly and ask for mercy by a show of penitence, or to drive me to the necessity of exposing to the world the full measure of your crime? In which case will the court be more likely to deal with leniency?"

"Perhaps you are right, Furay. In fact, I believe you are. You have given good advice, and I will respond in the same spirit. If you go to B. L. Crandall, of Tilsit, you will find it. I owed him one hundred and thirty-seven dollars, and he advanced me ninety-three more in money and goods, promising to hold the note till I redeemed it. I told him it came in a remittance from Washington, and that I expected more from the same source."

"I propose to go to Tilsit to-night for that bill," replied the detective, "and I want an order for it."

"To-night in this storm!" ejaculated the criminal, in amazement.

"Yes, that is just what I am going to do."

After some parley, the robber wrote the following order.

"CEYLON, —— TERRITORY, February, 18—.

"B. L. CRANDALL, TILSIT: Please deliver to Colonel John B. Furay, who is a special agent of the post-office department, that \$500 bill that I let you have. My statement to you about it was not correct. It belongs to the post-office department, and Colonel Furay must have that identical bill.

(Signed)

JOHN MIDDLETON."

The prisoner was turned over to the United States marshal for the territory, who happened to be in Ceylon in attendance on the district court.

After considerable trouble and delay, a span of horses with a driver were procured, and the special agent set forth through the darkness and the rain for Tilsit, forty-three miles distant. It was his purpose to reach there and secure the stolen note before any possible alarm could be sounded by telegraph the next morning. The roads were bad, the mud deep, and the drive slow; but the travelers, drenched till they were water-soaked, arrived at Tilsit about four o'clock A. M. The little town was buried in silence and slumber. He called first at the jail to inquire where Crandall lived, and was there directed to the sheriff, who, like the jailer, was unable to give the desired information. He then drove to the house of the postmaster, an honest, faithful old gentleman, whom, on account of advanced age, he desired, if possible, to avoid disturbing at that unseasonable hour. The excellent old man, however, rose with alacrity, and getting into the buggy, piloted the way to Crandall's. After some delay and parley through the window, that gentleman answered the bell in person, and invited the callers in. The special agent declined to advance beyond the oil-cloth in the outer hall, as the water dripping from his garments made a pool around his feet.

"Mr. Crandall," inquired the officer, "you know John Middleton?"

"Yes, I know such a person."

"Mr. Crandall, he gave you a five hundred dollar bill the third of this month."



"I am certainly sorry to have disturbed you, but I must have that bill."

"What business is it of yours," replied that gentleman, querulously, "whether he did or did not? Is it for a matter of no greater consequence that you dragged me out of bed?"

"I am certainly sorry to have disturbed you, but I must

have that bill. Here is a written order for it. The bill was stolen from the mails. I want it at once, and want it badly. The business does not admit of temporizing. Where is it?"

"I haven't got it."

"What have you done with it?"

"I do not understand this thing," remonstrated Crandall. "I want to know whether I am getting into a scrape or not."

"I certainly have no purpose or desire to bring trouble upon you," answered the officer. "One can only be compromised by his own misconduct, and there is nothing at present to indicate that your connection with this business is not legitimate and proper. However, very likely without suspecting it, you have been dealing with a thief, and in the prosecution of the case I am compelled to call on you for the stolen property that has fallen into your hands."

"I do not see the need of rousing the town in the dead hours of night," replied the merchant evasively, having gathered courage from the frank statement of the visitor. "Can't the matter be attended to just as well in the morning?"

"It cannot," answered he. "I have not ridden forty miles through the darkness and the storm for nothing. Rightfully or wrongfully you hold possession of a bill stolen from the mails. That bill I must have immediately."

At this point the postmaster mildly remarked, "You will not get into any trouble if you pursue a frank and straightforward course; but to avoid trouble, you must act squarely."

Crandall then proceeded to explain. "Middleton did give me such a bill. He had been owing me for years. After holding it a few days, surmising it might be a counterfeit, I took it to the president of the bank where I keep my account. As both of us were in doubt, we made a record of the numbers, and sent it to Chicago for deposit. It proved to be good."

"Have you the numbers?" queried the agent.

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"In the safe at my store."

"Well," urged the agent, "I must have them now."

After a futile remonstrance against the exposure to the storm, the merchant led the way to the store, unlocked the safe, and took therefrom a complete description of the note which Middleton had stolen from the mails. Upon that important scrap of paper the three placed their initials with the date, so that no dispute might ever arise in regard to its identity.

Now for the first time the detective had legal evidence to establish the guilt of the criminal, and he felt a hundred-fold repaid for the dismal night ride through mud and rain.

He went home with the postmaster, borrowed a dry shirt, and took a short nap while his garments were drying. So hot had been the chase that this was the first time he had closed his eyes in sleep for nearly sixty hours.

Crandall, as was afterward learned, turned out to be "crooked" in some of his transactions, and fell into serious trouble in consequence. Had the detective waited till the next day to make a comfortable trip to Tilsit on the cars, he would very probably have lost the case.

Of course no one but a person terribly in earnest would have driven over forty miles by night in a pelting storm to make sure of a scrap of evidence; but, it should be remembered, only persons who are terribly in earnest ever succeed as special agents of the post-office department. The picked men of the force are the men that in an army would be selected to lead a forlorn hope, and that would fall if need be pierced by a thousand bullets before they would turn their backs on danger.

In all, three hundred and thirty dollars of the stolen money was recovered and restored to the government,

eighty-six dollars having been found on the person of the prisoner, which was applied to the purpose.

The offender soon heard of the sham ride, and concluded that "undue duress," or some other illegal squeezing machine, had been applied to him. Backed by influential friends, he made a prolonged and desperate effort to escape from the penalty of his crimes, but, after lying in jail for eighteen months, decided to plead guilty in open court to two indictments. He received a moderate sentence. As no evidence was presented at the trial, the *ruse de guerre* was never exposed.

LOST AND FOUND.



Miss Edna Norman.

FROM small beginnings, like most successful enterprises, the boarding-school for young ladies at Cheltham had grown into a "female seminary" of wide celebrity and high repute. The village, or embryo city, regarded by the residents as the most attractive on the American coast, traced its prosperity, in great measure, to the school. Retired merchants and manufacturers, with children to educate, in looking about for choice locations, convenient to the large towns where they had accumulated fortunes, but free from the din and confusion of the metropolis, were drawn thither not more by the quiet beauty of the surround-

ings, than by the advantages held out for the training of the young. One after another they bought and built, till the broad avenues radiating from the nucleus of business were lined with miniature palaces, the abodes of wealth and culture, of taste and refinement. A residence at Cheltham is regarded by the

highly-favored ones who live there as a sort of patent of nobility. Few emotions give more pleasure in a small way than the ebullitions of semi-rural patriotism, for each individual seems to himself to be a large part of the place. "*Et quorum pars magna fui.*" The sentiment is as old as poetry.

The roofs on the eastern slope of the town overlook an island-studded bay, jutting up from the ocean. The lotos-eaters, wooed by the summer sea-breezes, might have lived and died here in perfect content. As might be expected, the darker sides of human nature were seldom brought into prominence in such a community.

In the course of time, the even flow of events was interrupted, and the post-office department was urgently invited to send thither a detective. In this instance the sufferers were not to be found among the merchants or millionaires, but among the pupils at the seminary. Many letters addressed to the young ladies failed to reach them. This was particularly true of missives containing valuable inclosures, though simple letters of affection and friendship were often intercepted. The principal became alarmed, and sent an appeal for help to the postmaster-general.

The papers were duly forwarded to special agent Sharretts, who, as a preliminary step, studied carefully the character of the losses. The town received its mails by a single line of railway, while the missing letters came from both directions and from widely separated parts of the country. If a route agent was inclined to be dishonest, he would hardly confine his depredations to a single village on the line of the road, or purloin letters which obviously contained nothing of value. At the local office the business was transacted by the postmaster and one clerk, neither of whom, if a thief, would be likely to restrict his operations to a single institution. However, to avoid possible mistakes, the special agent tested the office till fully satisfied that the trouble was not there.

He next turned his attention to a cross-eyed, dilapidated cripple, who hung about the seminary, and was supposed to

act as mail messenger. Observation for a brief period discovered that he was very irregular in the performance of the duty, and a little maneuvering satisfied the detective that the poor creature was innocent. Thus, by logical necessity, the inquiry was narrowed down to the school itself, and the officer was forced to the conclusion that he must look for the thief in one of the inmates.

While watching the movements of the messenger, he noticed that a particular young lady acted often as his substitute, taking not only her own mail, but that of the other pupils also. He further observed that she carefully scrutinized each letter, turning it over, and in some instances holding the envelope between her eye and the light. The frequency of her visits to the post-office, supplemented by these evidences of a prying curiosity, led him to study her appearance and actions attentively. It occasionally happens that an officer foresees that, in the performance of a painful duty which, if possible, he would thrust away as a bitter cup, he must encounter woman, not to render homage, but to bring home the terrors of a broken law. Under any circumstances the ordeal is severe, and in the higher walks of life it is terrible. In view of the approaching trial, however, the looks, motions, tones, and general demeanor of the suspected criminal become invested with a dreadful fascination.

About eighteen years old, rather above the medium height, and a brilliant brunette of the tropical type, she dressed rather richly for a school-girl, though always in good taste, and showed in the correctness of her language and the modulations of her voice the effects of careful training from childhood. But her eyes were at once a revelation and a mystery. Partially screened by long, thick lashes, those orbs of liquid light seemed to emit heat and cold, fire and frost in alternating flashes. They could allure a young companion with the fascination of a serpent, or freeze, if so disposed, with the chill of an iceberg. Held within the limits of propriety by the force of patient discipline, she appeared to be a reservoir of untamed power that surged back and forth, impatient of barriers — a

germ of vast possibilities for good or evil. One would expect to meet such types of beauty in the Indies, but not under the cold glimmer of the northern star.

Having discovered this much, the officer decided to call upon the principal of the seminary, to make some necessary inquiries, and to learn what degree of co-operation he might expect. He was received very courteously by Miss De Lacy, and without intimating the character of his suspicions, he managed to turn the conversation upon the scholars generally, and upon Miss Edna Norman in particular. It appeared she was the only child of wealthy and highly connected parents, in one of the most important of our commercial towns, and that no want of hers was suffered to go ungratified. In the way of dress and ornaments she was the recipient of presents much in advance of her years and position as a school-girl. "Why," remarked Miss De Lacy, whose studies were of a philosophical turn, "if Miss Edna should express a wish to bathe in liquid moonshine, her friends would cheerfully bear all the expenses of distillation. They are most excellent people, and mean to be prudent in indulging their daughter, but find it exceedingly difficult to keep within bounds the promptings of generosity."

According to the teacher, the character of the young lady was irreproachable in every respect, while her talents and accomplishments placed her in the front rank of the school. She was not studious, but very quick, absorbing knowledge as a sponge drinks moisture. Her latent tendencies toward waywardness had obviously never attracted the attention of the principal, which was itself an evidence that she deserved, in a measure at least, the praise so freely bestowed upon her.

Other pupils passed under similar though briefer review. By no word or look did the detective intimate a doubt of the correctness of Miss De Lacy's impressions. At the same time the losses were discussed, and the principal expressed great anxiety to have the offender discovered, as the depredations from extent and frequency could not fail to affect injuriously the reputation of the seminary. To this end, she agreed to

assist privately by every means in her power. With the understanding that they were to co-operate, the detective took leave, promising to soon repeat the visit.

It was arranged that the detective should furnish Miss De Lacy lists of every lot of letters sent to the seminary from the post-office, no matter who might act as messenger. She was to compare the lists with the letters actually delivered, and if any were missing, a correct inference in regard to the identity of the thief could easily be drawn. He was destined, however, to discover the truth by a much simpler and more expeditious method.

He prepared a decoy well suited to appeal to curiosity and the love of adornment,—twin weaknesses of the female mind, as some unsympathetic men are wont to characterize them. By a mild stratagem he contrived to have the customary messenger detailed temporarily for other employment.

The next day, while loitering in the lobby of the post-office, after the distribution of the heavy noon mail, he saw Miss Norman approaching alone. She received the mail for the seminary, including the missive prepared expressly for her benefit. In running the letters over, she paused on reaching this one, and inspected it very closely. Placing the package in her pocket, she left, and sauntered homeward, followed at a respectful distance, on the opposite side of the street, by a gentleman who was particularly interested to see what treatment his venture sustained at her hands. On reaching a portion of the way partially screened by shrubbery, she dexterously drew forth the letter, and tore off the end. Then, as if in alarm, she thrust it back, and, quickening her steps, soon disappeared. The gentleman, who had observed these movements with so much curiosity, followed leisurely behind, and not long after rang the bell at the door of the seminary. He called for Miss De Lacy, and in a few minutes that gentle and thoroughly estimable lady presented herself with an apology, hardly required under the circumstances, for her delay. The incidents already described were briefly narrated. The prin-



cipal could only ejaculate, "Can it be possible, can it be possible?" The fall of a favorite pupil seemed to paralyze her faculties, while the injury likely to result to the reputation of the school was doubtless greatly magnified in the mental turmoil incident to the discovery.

At this juncture the dinner-bell rang, and feet were heard trooping gayly through the halls. "Cannot there be some mistake about the identity of the young lady?" inquired Miss De Lacy, catching at straws in the extremity of her pain.

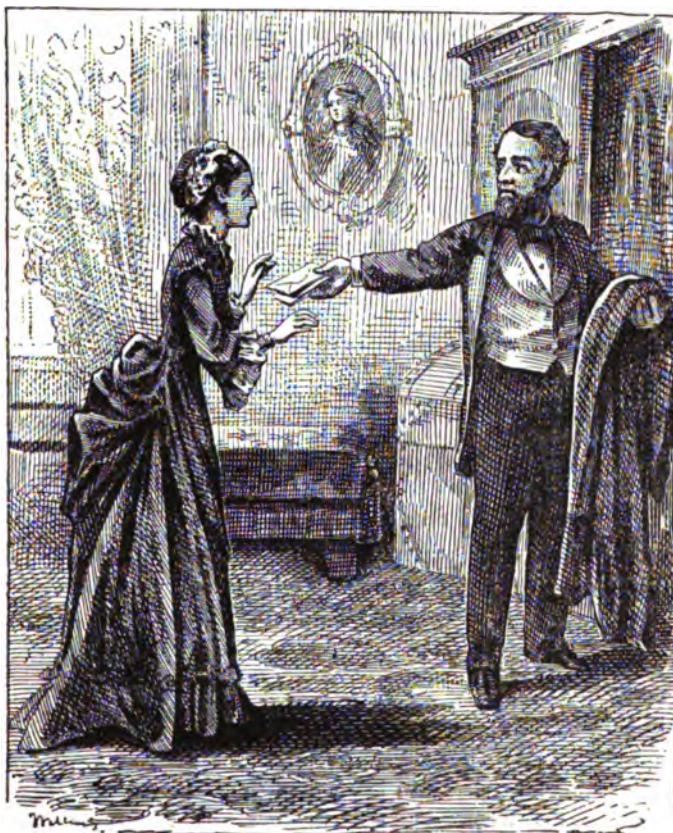
"I am afraid not," replied the officer, and he proceeded to describe her dress.

"It must be, it must be," ejaculated the principal, sorrowfully. "She wore such a dress this morning, and has just changed it for dinner."

"If that is the case, madam, I must request you to conduct me to the room of Miss Norman,

where you will probably find such evidences of guilt as will fully verify my suspicions."

At first she demurred feebly, but soon yielding a half involuntary compliance, she led the way up stairs to a neatly furnished apartment, which she said was allotted to the exclu-



"Taking it down, and thrusting his hand into the pocket, he drew forth, not only the decoy, but several other letters."

sive use of the suspected pupil. Pictures adorned the walls, and in one corner stood a wardrobe. "Will you be kind enough, madam," said the officer, pointing to the wardrobe, "to produce the dress which Miss Norman wore this morning."

The principal, however, pale, and struggling to keep back the tears, remained immovable as if powerless to stir. Thereupon the officer opened the door, when first in the array of female apparel was displayed the ill-fated suit. Taking it down, and thrusting his hand into the pocket, he drew forth not only the decoy, but several other letters addressed to different members of the school, all of which had been broken open. After these had been exhibited in detail to the astonished principal, so that she might fully grasp the situation, he remarked, "I trust you are now fully convinced, madam, of the correctness of my surmises, and that you will not hesitate from over-sensibility to afford me an opportunity to interview Miss Norman. I have reached a stage in the investigation where it is absolutely necessary that I should converse with her alone, with the view to a complete discovery of the facts."

"I cannot urge any objection, sir," replied she, so bewildered by the terrible developments that she led the way back to the parlor in silence, and, bidding her guest to be seated, lest in quest of the young lady.

A few minutes later the door opened, and Miss Norman stepped lightly in. From the smiles that wreathed her face, it was evident that she expected to meet some relative or friend, and the disappointment produced by the sight of a total stranger found quick expression on her countenance.

"Miss Norman?" interrogated the stranger, rising.

"Yes, sir."

"Please, take a seat, Miss Norman. I desire to converse with you a few minutes."

"With me?" inquired she, in great surprise.

"Yes, ma'am, with you. I am a special agent of the post-office department, and am now in this locality for the purpose of investigating complaints which are supposed to connect the loss of letters addressed to the pupils of this institution with carelessness or dishonesty in the post-office. Knowing that the young ladies have suffered great annoyance, I wish, before proceeding further, to obtain exact information in reference to

the depredations. Have you heard complaints from others, or have you any to make yourself?"

"I regret, sir," replied she, coldly, "that I have no information whatever to give in regard to the missing epistles, either on my own account, or on account of the other pupils. I must say I have heard very little about the matter. I am at a loss to conjecture why any one should consult me on a subject about which I know little and care less."

The last sentence was delivered with an air of petulance and impatience as if the speaker wished to terminate a disagreeable conference. She rose from the chair like one born to command rather than to obey, and, dropping a haughty bow to the gentleman, was about to depart without further waste of ceremony, when he spoke with an emphasis and authority which interrupted the incipient courtesy. "Wait one moment, if you please, Miss Norman. It may seem singular to you that a stranger should solicit an interview for the purpose of questioning you on a topic so alien apparently to your situation and thoughts. As you will find, however, I have excellent reasons for my course. Before explaining them, however, let me premise that I have discovered the thief."

The color left the cheeks of the girl, and for a moment she stood pale and speechless like a marble statue. Then, with a masterly effort to regain her composure, she remarked, in tones of forced indifference, "I am at a loss to see how that concerns me, sir."

"It concerns you very deeply," replied the special agent. "I have been accustomed from youth to reverence womanhood, and, in the performance of the painful duties that often devolve upon me, I have in a few instances been compelled to utter words that seem cruel to those who by virtue of sex should command my homage. You can imagine, then, how much pain it costs me to tell you that I know all. Here are a number of letters, broken open hardly an hour ago, and found in your pocket. I stood near when you tore off the end of this one." He spread out the missives for her inspection.

During the colloquy extraordinary changes had passed in quick succession over the expressive countenance of the culprit. She entered the parlor with bounding steps, in fullness of life and spirit. The revulsion of feeling produced at meeting a stranger instead of a friend, and at the commonplace character of the errand which called her from more pleasurable occupations, she made no effort to disguise. At the first hint tending to connect her with the crime, her eye flashed defiance as if she expected to crush the hateful intruder with a look. How vain the attempt, how idle her self-confidence, she soon realized! As well might raw recruits essay to storm a rampart bristling with guns, and manned by veterans who had faced the perils of a hundred conflicts. The girl wailed before the steady eye of the man, and when the mutilated letters were shown, she gave up completely. Pride, dignity, composure, were thrown to the winds. Clasping her hands in the attitude of a suppliant, and advancing a few steps toward the officer, she exclaimed pathetically, "Do not expose me. O, spare me — save me!" And then, as if communing with herself, "What will father say? My poor, dear mother! What cruel fiend has possessed me!"

"Miss Norman," said the officer, "I hardly need assure you that you have my profoundest sympathies. I shall do nothing needlessly to add the weight of a hair to the load which is already crushing you. The investigation, however, must be pushed to the end. A part of my mission is to right the wrongs that have been done. As you hope for mercy here and hereafter, you must aid in the work of restitution. Where are the other letters taken by you?"

"They are locked up in my trunk, sir," replied the girl, submissively.

"I will go with you," answered he; "and you must deliver them all up to me."

Interposing no objection, she led the way in silence to her room, and cautiously closed the door, that none of the other scholars might discover how grievously she had injured them.

For a moment she hesitated irresolutely, and then, at the bidding of the officer, unlocked a large trunk. By his direction, she began to remove the garments one by one. Mutilated letters, addressed to different members of the school, came to light, singly and in packages, scattered promiscuously among the clothing. As these were handed to the special agent, he placed them in piles on the table. While his eye was partially averted, he noticed that the girl dexterously folded what appeared to be a small wooden box, in some article of apparel, which she then nervously removed as if especially desirous of concealing it. After reaching the bottom of the trunk, he inquired, "Are these all the letters you have belonging to the other young ladies?"

"Yes, sir, all."

"Have you ever destroyed any?"

"No, sir, not one."

"Miss Norman, what disposition did you make of the contents of these letters?"

"I put them back, sir."

"Where?"

"Into the letters, sir, that they were taken from. I have never made any use of any of the inclosures. You will find everything just as it came into my hands."

"What was your object in breaking them open?"

"O, I don't know, I don't know. I must have been crazy. I shall certainly go distracted;" and, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

The officer walked around to the opposite end of the trunk, and picked up the box which the culprit was evidently over-anxious to conceal. It was made of rosewood, inlaid with ivory—a piece of elaborate and costly workmanship. As he lifted it from its hiding-place, the girl sprang at him with the fury of a tigress, and forgetting herself, exclaimed, in a tone of almost savage intensity, "You shall not examine that, sir;" then, remembering that the man held her destiny in his gripe, her manner suddenly changed to softness, and in pleading

accents she begged him not to open it. The discovery of her guilt, with the dread prospect of exposure and punishment, had not affected her so profoundly as the appearance in the hands of a stranger of that simple casket. The situation perplexed the officer exceedingly. While sincerely desirous to save her from unnecessary pain, he began to suspect from her extreme agitation that she was even more guilty than previous developments indicated, and that the proof of the fact would be found in the box. It was not his habit to stop in the middle of an investigation, or to rest satisfied with partial and imperfect discoveries. At the same time he had no prurient curiosity to gratify, or disposition to transcend in the least the strict limit of official inquiry. While determined to learn the extent of her criminality in connection with the robberies, he was equally desirous not to go a step beyond. He tried to explain the requirements of his position, but the young lady was insensible to arguments and persuasion. Finally, to cut the matter short, he remarked, peremptorily, "The contents of that box I must examine, and if they have no relation to the unhappy events which brought me hither, rest assured no one else will ever be the wiser for it."

"Guilty as I am, wicked as you think me to be," remonstrated the girl, "there is nothing concealed in that box which it concerns you to know. If I have but one favor to ask, please believe my words, and return it."

Although her manner was now frank, her statement appeared to the officer incredible. Already during the day she had both stolen and falsified, so that he was hardly ready to accept her declarations till she had brought forth fruit more meet for repentance. Taking a string of keys from the trunk, he unlocked the casket, while the girl averted her face in silent, sullen submission to an overmastering fate. A glance informed him that she had spoken the truth. He closed and replaced the box with an apology which elicited no reply.

As the detective was proceeding in the story without further reference to the episode, the writer ventured to interrupt the

flow of the narrative by interpolating a reminder. "Sharretts, you omitted to mention what you saw on lifting the cover."

"Yes," replied he. "Perhaps I erred in alluding to the incident at all, though it made a deep impression on me at the time, and comes back with great vividness now. Even after the lapse of many years, I cannot consent to violate the promise then voluntarily proffered to the heart-broken child. This much I will say, however, the casket held nothing which reflected in the slightest degree upon the purity of her character. You must excuse me if I tell no more."



"Taking a string of keys from the trunk, he unlooked the casket, while the girl averted her face in silent, sullen submission."

Having discovered the full extent of the depredations, and recovered the stolen property, the officer remarked, "I must now summon Miss De Lacy. She must know all."

"Please, do not," remonstrated the girl, with tears streaming from her eyes. "It will surely kill me to have her learn what

a guilty wretch I am. She has always been so trustful, so kind! O, why do I live! Why can't I die! Terrible, terrible! So happy yesterday, to-day ruined, ruined forever! My heart will break." And she clasped her palms over her heart in a vain effort to repress its convulsive throbs.

"Young lady," resumed the detective, "let me entreat you to be calm. Do not yield to these violent paroxysms of grief. The real penalty of crime belongs to the commission, not to the discovery. If truly penitent, you are far better off to-day than you were yesterday. It is for your sake alone that I desire the presence of Miss De Lacy. You have broken the laws of the land, thereby rendering yourself liable to arrest and imprisonment. Instead of pushing the case against you, I desire to intercede in your behalf, and can only hope to prevail through the co-operation of the principal."

"Must you expose me to the whole school?" she gasped.

"O, no, ma'am. Rest easy on that point. I will keep the matter as quiet as possible, communicating with no one here except Miss De Lacy."

A messenger was sent for the principal, who met the officer in her private parlor, when the situation was explained to her. This most estimable lady was sorely stricken at the developments, and wept bitterly over the defection of her favorite pupil. Bewildered at the painful perplexities of the situation, she knew not what to say or do, till the detective came to her rescue. With the view of giving direction to the current of affairs, he said, "It will not answer to allow this young lady to remain here, nor, on the other hand, must she be sent away immediately. On the plea of illness, certainly justifiable in her present condition, she can be transferred to your room, and there maintain the seclusion so essential to her comfort and recovery. Her father must be telegraphed for at once, and to him you must break the sad intelligence. Since this misguided girl was authorized to receive your mails from the post-office, I cannot, as an agent of the department, take measures to arrest her, a move which I should be very loth to make,

even if it fell within my province, as the protection of the postal laws ceases when letters pass from the custody of sworn employés into the hands of the owners or their agents. She is, however, unquestionably amenable to punishment under the laws of the state ; and from this you may save her.

"On the table in her room are all the violated letters, with the contents, as I judge, intact. She did not break the seals to appropriate the inclosures, but from a morbid curiosity to pry into the affairs of her associates. After the final departure of Miss Norman, these missives must all be delivered to the proper owners, and you can exercise your pleasure in assigning reasons for the delay and mutilation.

"The postmaster here, who is directly concerned in the investigation, must also be informed of the crime, which I will attend to personally ; and, knowing him as I do, I can vouch for his discretion.

"I need not assure you that I feel very sorry for Miss Norman, and desire to spare her all unnecessary pain and mortification. To your hands I commit her case, feeling that in her beloved teacher she will find her most effective advocate.

"Guilty as the girl is, she has not passed the pale of salvation. Much depends on the conduct of her father. The keenness of the disgrace may render him at first violent and abusive. You must intercede with him. Urge him by the memories of the past and the hopes of the future to speak gently to the erring, to win back by kindness and love the wanderer to the fold. If I, commissioned to bring law-breakers to punishment, can pity and forgive this thoughtless child, how much more should the author of her life ! "

Miss De Lacy could hardly find language in which to suitably clothe her thanks to the detective for the tender and delicate manner in which he had conducted the investigation, and for his kindness to the unhappy girl. She promised to follow out his suggestions in regard to future movements.

They then returned together to the room of Miss Norman. As the teacher entered the door, the scholar, covering her face



"Rushing forward, she clasped the broken reed in her arms, exclaiming, 'Edna, dear Edna, I know all, but I forgive all!'"

with her hands as if ashamed to be seen, sobbed hysterically. The sight overpowered Miss De Lacy in an instant. Rushing forward, she clasped the broken reed in her arms, exclaiming, "Edna, dear Edna, I know all, but I forgive all! Dry your tears, my dear child.

No harm shall come near you, if I can prevent. This kind gentleman more than tempers justice with mercy, for his whole aim is to save you from troubles that might have come, and to promote the return of peace."

"What shall I do? What can I do?" exclaimed the excited creature, hiding her face on the bosom of the teacher. "How can I dare ever look in your face again?"

"Edna," replied the lady, "for what you have done you

have suffered severely, and I think sufficiently. We will let the past bury its dead; and, looking to our merciful Father above for strength, let us pray that the experience of this dark hour may lead my poor erring child to the arms of her God. We have present duties to perform, and will begin now. This gentleman has marked out a course which meets my hearty approval.

"Some of the scholars suspect that something unpleasant has happened to you, but they have not the remotest conception of what it is. I want you to bring these letters — all you have ever taken — to my room, where you can remain for the present undisturbed. I shall telegraph for your father at once, and on his arrival he will take such steps for the future as he may think best."

The last announcement revived in full force the paroxysm of grief. The anguish of the child at the thought of meeting the parent upon whom she had brought such deep disgrace drove her to the verge of distraction. After the first outburst of tears, her lips closed rigidly, and her eyes became set with a stony stare, as if reason had fled. At the suggestion of the officer she was conducted to the room of Miss De Lacy, where some cordial was administered with reviving effect. In a few moments she grew calm again.

Having accomplished his mission, the detective took his departure. Passing in safety several batteries of curious eyes, he merged into the open air, and soon left the academic shades of Cheltham far behind.

As was afterwards learned, the father of Miss Norman hurried to Cheltham in response to the telegram, and on hearing the cause of the summons was at first so overwhelmed with astonishment and indignation that he refused to see his child. Again, however, Miss De Lacy proved so effective an advocate that the sterner feelings of the parent relented; and in the natural sequence of the emotions, pity succeeded wrath. Once more the trembling girl was folded in his arms, fully forgiven and restored.

A few years pass. The errant school-girl has become wife and mother, the light of a happy home, the pride of a husband noted in his native city not more for wealth and enterprise than for sterling worth. Next to the duties to her family, she takes most delight in ministering to the sick and needy, and in trying to reclaim the erring. Quiet, thoughtful, earnest, her steps have brought comfort and peace to many sad households.

A Tell-Tale Seal.



T

HERE is a class of post-office thieves who make a specialty of rifling the registered letters that pass through their hands in transit on journeys of greater or less length. Some of them have managed operations very shrewdly, in the evident belief that they had discovered an infallible method for doing the work and at the same time escaping detection. Too late they generally learn by sad experience that no patents can be taken out for the protection of crime.

In this class of cases something tangible always

remains to exhibit the peculiar style of workmanship belonging to each; and it would often surprise the uninitiated to learn how many traits of character, what indexes of habit and vocation, can be picked up by careful study of the minute points

presented for inspection. Unless, however, an agent cultivates a taste for thoroughness even to details and trifles that might at first view appear utterly insignificant, he will never succeed in interpreting the hieroglyphics.

At intervals of two or three weeks, beginning in the summer of 1871, registered packages passing to and fro from Chicago to a town in the interior of Dakota Territory, which for convenience will be called Wellington,—though that was not its name,—were reported to the department as rifled. As the season wore on, the complaints increased in frequency. Under the old method of doing business at head-quarters, which often amounted practically to a distribution of the cases about equally "among the boys," the agent stationed at Chicago received most of them at first; then a part were sent to an agent in Iowa; and as the number multiplied, Furay, at Omaha, was favored with an occasional sprinkling. Under the present more perfect system, great care is taken to group together all the complaints growing out of each series of depredations, to locate the seat of trouble by comparisons carefully made in the department itself, and to give everything bearing on the subject to the officer specifically charged with the investigation.

March came around before Mr. Furay found time to give personal attention to this particular thief. He then passed over the route to Wellington, eighty miles by stage-coach from the nearest railroad station, with ten intermediate offices. All the packages remained over night at Sioux City, Iowa, a fact sufficiently important to invite close scrutiny; but the detective soon became satisfied that he must look elsewhere for the robber. His suspicions were next directed to another office, where also the mails lay over night; but the postmaster bore a countenance so open and honest that he too was eliminated from the problem.

He continued on to Wellington, skirmishing along the line, and observing the faces of the postmasters; but these studies in physiognomy threw no light on the mystery, as the officials of the department on the route, though far removed from central

supervision, seemed to be all that their affectionate uncle at Washington could wish. On the return trip the detective was equally observant and equally perplexed. At that season the stage stopped for the night at Hannibal; but there, likewise, the postmaster shared the honest looks that seemed to prevail through eastern Dakota.

Proceeding on, the passengers dined at Raven's Nest, where one Michael Mahoney, Sr., kept a small store and the post-office, running also—with the aid of a young son and a son-in-law—a farm. The store was managed by Michael Mahoney, Jr., a married son, who happened to be absent both when the special agent went up and when he returned. The face of the old man indicated that he was vicious, ignorant, and unscrupulous; but clearly he was not sharp enough to execute nice work like that under investigation.

With the exception of a general knowledge of the offices, the special agent returned but little wiser for the trip, and concluded, as the best that could be done under the circumstances, to allow the bird to flutter a little longer before renewing the hunt. Meanwhile the thief grew more reckless, and the papers that came to Mr. Furay, though covering a fraction only of the depredations, located the thief on the lower end of the route, within fifty miles of the terminus.

During the summer, one or two other agents took up the matter cursorily, but made no discoveries. In the mean time Mr. Furay was kept too busily occupied with a succession of important cases in Nebraska to give much thought to the outlying territory of Dakota. At length, in September, he went carefully over the papers that had accumulated during his late prolonged absences, and soon knew exactly where to look for the chap who had so long plundered the public with impunity.

For some time Chicago had been closing registered package envelopes with wax, which, on this route at least, effectually secured them against molestation. Imitating the example, Camden, Dakota, began to do the same; but, having no seal

suitable for the purpose, improvised a substitute by using the flat surface of a rasp.

Camden placed the wax near each end of the envelope, which materially interfered with the game of the thief, because it was just here that he operated. Evidently piqued that a rural postmaster should presume to outwit him, he studied hard to devise some means for opening these particular packages without leaving such traces of his handiwork as would attract the notice of other officials through whose hands they might subsequently pass. The effort was crowned with a measurable degree of success, for Mr. Furay, at the general overhauling referred to, was the first to discover that the seal had been tampered with.

As it was necessary to break one of the seals, the object of the robber was to restore it as nearly as possible to its original appearance; and to effect this he used a dampened thimble, rolling it over the wax while the latter was hot. There was but one envelope of the kind in the lot, but it told the whole story to the eye that could penetrate its meaning. As the thimble passed along the edge, it left the mark of the rim, then a smooth narrow band, followed by pointed ~~.....~~ elevations closely resembling continuous lines, thus : ~~.....~~

On the opposite side of the same seal the wax flattened out so as to cover a good deal of surface; and, to give it the desired appearance, the manipulator resorted to the thimble again, but this time used a different one, the indentations on the surface being perceptibly finer and more shallow.

The violation of that single seal betrayed the thief, for the detective at once inferred that the job was done in a store where the operator had access to a variety of thimbles. Only one was required; and no person but a merchant would be likely to have more than one within convenient reach. In a store, however, it would be natural to take down a boxful, and place it on the counter, to be selected from at random. One is picked up, used, and thrown back. The operator now finds another spot that requires attention, and without waiting to

hunt for the thimble that has already served as a seal,—for the wax is cooling and no time must be lost,—grasps the first that comes to hand, too absorbed in the main issue to give a

thought to what would pass as an insignificant subsidiary trifle. No rascal is sharp enough to guard every point, a general fact that illustrates over and over again, in the experience of man, the seminal truth, that in a mercenary and physical, as well as in a high and spiritual sense, there is neither wisdom nor profit outside of the limits of absolute

integrity and unflinching uprightness.

The detective laid aside the papers with a light heart, knowing that at last he was complete master of the situation. Below Camden on the infested route the post-office was kept in a store at two

Mr. Mahoney, Jr.

points only, and in one of those no thimbles were sold. The clue pointed unerringly to Raven's Nest as the spot where alone the requisite conditions to account for the imprint on the violated seal were to be found. Thither the officer accordingly went; and the moment his eye rested on Michael Mahoney, Jr., he recognized the heaven-branded features of a thief.



Returning to Sioux City, he telegraphed to another agent who had a large number of the cases growing out of the robberies, to come on at once. The two men took stations, one on each side of Raven's Nest, and in thirty hours they arrested the youthful criminal, who in the interval stole four decoy-letters, and paid a portion of the contents to one of the officers who was testing him.

Mr. Furay collected from the thief and his relatives the full amount stolen from the mails during the entire continuance of the depredations, restoring the money to the rightful owners dollar for dollar. Young Mahoney made a written confession, supplemented by three or four codicils relating to items which, to use his own language, "at first did not to me occur." He was tried the following February, and sentenced to the penitentiary for the term of three years.

Within fifteen days from the time when the doors of the prison closed upon the son, the villainous old father, acting perhaps on the theory that no two shots ever strike in exactly the same place, began also to rob the mails. In due time, Mr. Furay again appeared on the scene and took the old reprobate away a prisoner. When the trial came on, a material witness for the prosecution happened to be absent, the lack of whose testimony proved fatal to the case, for, after hanging a day and a night, the jury brought in a verdict of acquittal.

Taking in Strangers.



WILLIAM PARKER M.D.

seem that rational beings should voluntarily renounce the sympathies of the good, to enter upon a reckless crusade against society, not a few even of the highly gifted, driven on by some strangely perverse influence, have deliberately entered the ways of crime only to encounter the inevitable penalties of

ANY misguided men expend in contriving devices for defrauding the public, sufficient labor and ingenuity to win an honorable support, or often affluence, if directed to proper ends. For the most part the returns are irregular and precarious, while every step forward increases the perils that beset the path of the operator. Comfort and peace are forgotten in the wild whirl that hurries him on to new fields and fresh ventures. However smoothly the stream may glide at the outset, it rushes onward resistlessly to the rocks and rapids that no mortal can pass in safety. Incredible as it may

disappointment, disgrace, and ruin. Life is passed in a perpetual but vain struggle to escape the necessary consequences of evil actions.

“Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind.
The thief doth fear each bush an officer.”

Even the dread walls of the prison have in some cases been welcomed as preferable to the tortures of uncertainty.

On the 16th of June, 1874, Isaac Myers, special agent of the post-office department, happened to be in Washington, Washington County, Pennsylvania, on official business, when his attention was called to a communication just received from Mrs. Mary A. Whetham, Kirklington Hall, Southwell, Notts, England, dated June 3, and inclosing two letters addressed to herself, and purporting to have been written by “Winter Hamilton, M. D.” The first was dated Canal Fulton, Ohio, February 18, 1874, and gave what was intended to be a romantic and touching account of the death of a distant relative of hers, Edmund Whetham, whom, though a stranger, the benevolent doctor took to his home and tenderly nursed during his last sickness. On learning that his hours were numbered, the young Englishman called for a lawyer and made his will, bequeathing to Mrs. Whetham two thousand acres of land in Texas on condition that she paid the bill of Dr. Hamilton, otherwise the estate was to go to him. He forwards an account of two hundred dollars, or forty pounds, for medical attendance, board, and funeral expenses. He also suggests that if she will accompany her draft with a promise to repay any outlay he may incur, he will send an agent to Texas to examine the lands. The cost will not exceed twenty-five pounds, and may put her in possession of an immense fortune. The letter closes with a pious appeal to the heart and pocket of his correspondent. “I feel that I did my duty to your friend; I have now done my duty to you. I shall feel obliged at receiving your decision at your very earliest convenience.”

May 18, 1874, “Winter Hamilton, M. D.,” addresses a second letter to Mrs. Whetham, having meanwhile transferred his

residence from Canal Fulton, Ohio, to Washington, Pennsylvania. After a brief reference to his former communication, he writes that a foreign letter having been forwarded inadvertently from his late home to the dead-letter office, he infers it must have been from her, as he has no other correspondent abroad, and inquires whether she has decided to accept the legacy. This caution is added by way of postscript: "Copy my address very carefully, we have so many Washingtons in America."

Mrs. Whetham took no notice of the first effusion, though satisfied that the writer was trying to obtain money under false pretenses. On receipt of the second, she felt it to be a duty to others, less wary than herself, to communicate the facts to the authorities, in order that steps might be taken to punish the swindler. She accordingly inclosed both to the "superintendent of police, Washington, Washington County, Pennsylvania," with the information that she had no such relative as the person described by Dr. Hamilton. She further explained that the Rev. F. Mills, to whose care the letters were addressed, was rector at Hocherton, two miles distant, and that she was patron of the living. Hence she inferred that the doctor had studied a "clergy list" of England, which gives an account of all livings with their patrons. She informs the "superintendent of police" that the letters are forwarded to him for the public benefit, remarking, with the prudence characteristic of the woman of business, that she will hold herself "in no way responsible for any steps taken."

As "Winter Hamilton, M. D., " was clearly using the mails for purposes of fraud in violation of section three hundred and one of the code, Mr. Myers determined to hunt down the rascal. He examined the registers of hotels and boarding-houses, going back over a long period, without finding the name. No one could remember such an individual. If he ever lived at Washington, he left on disappearing no trace of his existence or identity.

Not to be bluffed in the chase by the faintness of the trail,

Mr. Myers proceeded to Canal Fulton, Stark County, Ohio, whence the letters to Mr. Whetham were addressed. The postmaster at that place only knew that a person calling himself Winter Hamilton came to the office once in the fall of 1873, and took a number of letters bearing that superscription. The stranger vanished as suddenly as he appeared. Subsequently he requested the postmaster to forward his mail to Washington and Uniontown, Pennsylvania, but for several months none had been received. Beginning the game cautiously, the doctor evidently selected an office where he was unknown and where he intended never to be known, visiting the place but once after sending abroad the first installment of his wares. Nothing further could be learned at Canal Fulton.

Mr. Myers returned to Pennsylvania, visiting Washington and Uniontown in search of additional evidence. Quite a large foreign mail came to both offices, but in the multiplicity of names, neither postmaster recollects that of Winter Hamilton. Mr. Myers requested them, in case any letters for that address should be received in the future, to take particular notice of the party who called for them, and also to notify him by telegraph.

For several months the pursuit was suspended, the tracks of the swindler being rather obscure and other work engrossing the attention of the agent. Meanwhile, some one of the numerous parties in England who had been favored with an effusion from the eminent philanthropist, gave a résumé of the letter to the press. The paragraph, copied into American papers, obtained quite an extensive circulation. It set forth that a person over the signature of "William Parker, M. D., " was writing from Washington, Pennsylvania, to members of parliament, ministers of the Church, and other wealthy and benevolent people in England, representing that certain distant relatives of theirs, clandestinely in the United States, had died at his house in indigent circumstances, leaving an abundance of good land in Texas, but no ready cash to meet the expenses

of the last sickness and burial, all of which he had borne, and for which he desired to be indemnified.

As the literary ventures of the doctor were constructed on a single model, the publication was likely to illuminate nearly every person in England whose sympathies had been awakened by the sufferings and fate of the erring but repentant scion of his house, and to interrupt any further outflow of pounds sterling that might be prompted by gratitude or greed. An equally probable result of the exposure would be the hasty flight of the operator from the locality connected in the papers with his fame. Living for the most part on the wing, such birds scent danger from afar, soaring away with a change of plumage at the first note of alarm. Lost to sight in the blue empyrean, they drop down at length on some distant shore, so metamorphosed that none but an experienced hunter would recognize the quality of the game.

Mr. Myers, meeting the newspaper paragraph referred to, and not forgetful of our old acquaintance, "Winter Hamilton, M. D.," revisited Washington, Pennsylvania, toward the close of October, to renew the search. He learned that a Dr. Parker had resided there during the previous May and June. The gentleman bore an excellent reputation, was welcomed in the best society, and was supposed to be an Englishman of decayed fortunes, seeking to bury among strangers the memory of his griefs. The more impressible were attracted by the mystery, heightened by the air of reserved and gentle melancholy, that distinguished him from the coarser grain of the common herd. He taught a novel method of short-hand writing, both as a pastime and a means of livelihood, so favorably impressing the public during his brief sojourn that he carried away recommendations from the leading citizens of the place.

After leaving Washington, the "doctor" resided at Uniontown, Pennsylvania, about three months, receiving many letters from England addressed to William Parker and Winter Hamilton. Here, also, he circulated among the best people, and taught short-hand. It was not his policy, however, to tarry

long in one place, and so, procuring a fresh reinforcement of recommendations, he removed to Connellsville, Pennsylvania, where he played the same rôle which had carried him safely through his sojourn at Washington and Uniontown.

Mr. Myers pushed on to Connellsville in pursuit, and learned that Parker, evidently alarmed by the exposure in the press, had suddenly decamped, leaving a part of his effects at the Yough House. The agent stopped over night at the same hotel, cautiously trying to gather tangible proofs of the guilt of the doctor, but that worthy had taken equal precautions to prevent the success of any such enterprise. Long experience in eluding the winged avengers of the law had made him careful in covering his tracks. Probably he never carried longer than was absolutely necessary any papers that might compromise his safety. There was a chance that he might return, or send for his luggage. In either event his capture would easily follow.

Mr. Myers left the next day, having arranged with the postmaster to notify him by telegraph if Parker returned, or if further letters for him came. The interval of delay was brief. October 25th the postmaster telegraphed that Parker was at Connellsville, and asked for instructions. He was directed to keep a sharp lookout and wait. At daylight, the morning of the 26th, Myers turned up again at Connellsville, repairing at once to the post-office to learn the posture of affairs. In the meantime an incident had occurred which might have resulted disastrously had the pursuit been less vigorously pressed.

On the 10th of September Parker wrote from Connellsville to the Rev. J. E. N. Molesworth, vicar of Rochdale, Lancashire, the stereotyped story, varied only with a change of names, that two months before, a young Englishman, Edmund Molesworth, had arrived at that place, sick and friendless. The quick sympathies of the doctor's wife were enlisted by the helpless condition of the stranger, and she proposed to have him moved to their own house. Since then she had watched over him with the tenderness of a sister. That very morning

the youth handed him a paper, containing the address of a distant relative in England, with a request that he be written to without delay, to remit enough to defray the expenses of the funeral, as he could die easier if he knew he was not to be buried by the hand of charity. The doctor continues : " If you see fit to send me any money for his funeral, you can do so ; if not, I shall see that he is not buried by the town. For my own and my wife's services he is heartily welcome."

In response to the appeal, Dr. Molesworth purchased a draft for ten pounds, and mailed it to Parker. After reflecting a day or two, however, he came to the conclusion that he was the victim of a swindle, and wrote to the London post-office to have the letter intercepted, but it had already gone forward. Accordingly, the Foreign Office addressed the following note to the department at Washington : —

" Registered No. 138,775.

" GENERAL POST-OFFICE,
LONDON, October 8, 1874. }

" SIR : I have the honor to inform you that a letter has been received from Rev. Dr. Molesworth, Vicar of Rochdale, in which he requests me to detain a letter, addressed to ' Dr. William Parker, Connellsville, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, N. America,' and containing a bill of exchange for £10.

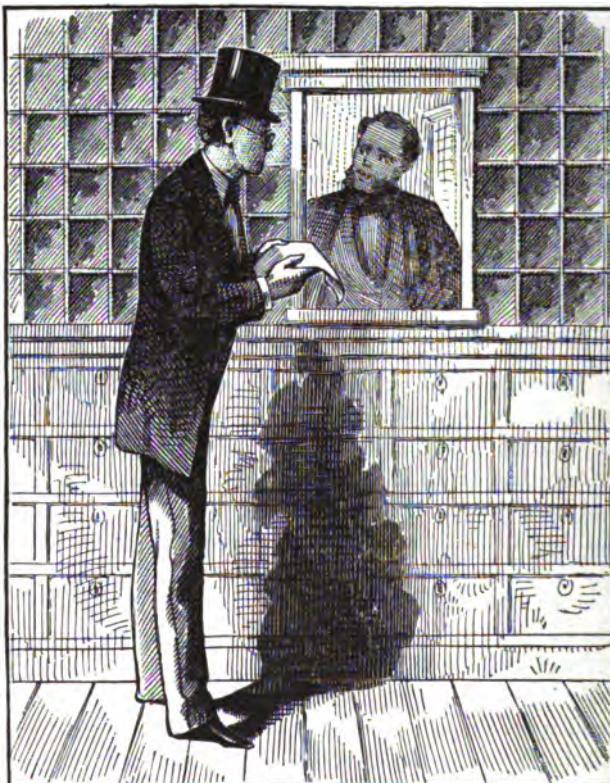
" Dr. Molesworth states that the person calling himself ' Dr. William Parker ' has applied to him for pecuniary aid ; that there is reason to believe that he has done so under false pretenses.

" I have informed Dr. Molesworth that the letter was dispatched from Liverpool to New York on the 1st instant, by the Inman packet ' City of Paris,' and that it is, therefore, beyond my control, but that I would write to you upon the subject.

" I think it right to state that, had the letter been addressed to a place in this country, it would not have been in the power of this department to withhold it from delivery, if a person of the name of Dr. William Parker had been found to reside at the address. But you will, of course, act in the matter according to your discretion and to the regulations of your department. I shall be glad to be informed in what manner the letter has, in the result, been disposed of.

" I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant, F. HILL.
" The Postmaster General, at Washington, U. S."

On the 23d, the acting superintendent of foreign mails at Washington addressed the usual circular of inquiry to the postmaster at Connellsville, asking what disposition had been made of the letter in question. On calling at the office the morning of the 25th, Parker received three foreign letters, which he proceeded to open before leaving the vestibule.



"While thus engaged, the clerk inadvertently informed him that he had an inquiry from the department."

While thus engaged, the clerk inadvertently informed him that he had an inquiry from the department in reference to a British letter forwarded by the City of Paris on the 1st inst. to his address at Connellsville, and asked if he had received it.

Parker replied in the negative, and immediately gave back the three letters in his hand, with the remark that they were not his. He turned to walk away, when the clerk requested him to indorse on the envelopes, "Opened by mistake," with his signature; and, after a moment's hesitation, he somewhat sullenly complied. The return of the letters indicated that the doctor was thoroughly alarmed. Exposed by the press and interrogated by the department, he needed no further warning to fly. He passed an uneasy Sunday, doubtless resolved to escape by the first available train.

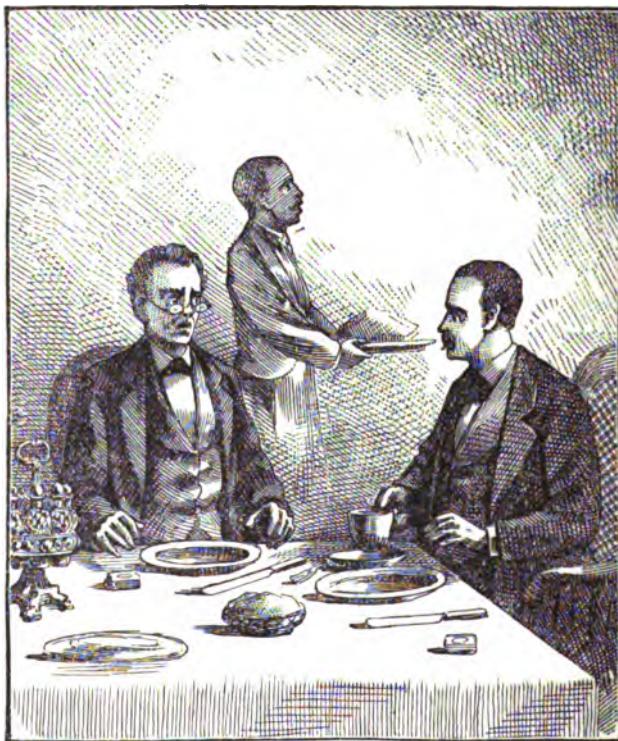
Already, however, it was too late, for the impending crash was just upon him. Mr. Myers proceeded from the post-office to the Yough House. In a few minutes the bell rang for breakfast, and watching the opportunity, he followed directly behind Parker into the dining-room, and took a contiguous seat at table. Though rather nervous, the doctor engaged moderately in conversation. By a singular confusion of facts and fiction, a recent cable despatch announced the arrest in London, a few days before, of a Dr. William Parker, who had been extensively engaged in swindling operations at Connellsville, Pennsylvania. The doctor remarked that he had read the item with great satisfaction, as a paragraph had been going the rounds of the press calculated, from the identity of names, to do him great injustice and wrong, but that the arrest of the actual swindler could not fail to completely vindicate him. It is possible that the despatch was concocted as a blind by a confederate of Parker in England.

Learning that Mr. Myers was from the seat of government, the doctor became quite inquisitive concerning matters at the capital, but manifested little disposition to enlighten his interlocutor in reference to his own affairs, parrying with the skill of an adept questions designed to elicit information in respect to his nativity, antecedents, and business.

After fencing for about an hour without getting much nearer to the real issue, the special agent suddenly brought things to a crisis by the remark, —

"Doctor, you have, or should have a letter, sent you by Dr. Molesworth, vicar of Rochdale, containing a bill of exchange for ten pounds sterling. I have been sent by the post-master-general of the United States to get that letter; and you will please give it to me."

The doctor trembled violently, almost convulsively. A momentary flush, followed by deathly paleness, overspread his



"With guilt pictured upon every lineament, he answered, 'I have not got the letter.'"

features. His eyes rolled rapidly and uncontrollably. With guilt pictured upon every lineament, he answered in a faint and quavering voice,—

"I have not got the letter."

"I can prove," replied the agent, "that you took it from the post-office here, and that you have received, besides, a large number of letters from different persons in England. Your little game has lasted well, but it is now played out."

Rallying under the home thrust, and recovering in a measure his wonted composure, the doctor proceeded to expostulate.

"There is either a big mistake here, or you are trying to put up a job on me. My only correspondent in England is my son. The letters taken from the office were written by him. The suspicions unjustly directed against me are due to no fault of mine, but to the actions, whatever they may be, of the Dr. Parker lately arrested in London. It is a gross outrage to make one man suffer for the sins of another."

The agent suggested interrogatively, —

"Perhaps, if so disposed, you could explain that despatch. You may have a friend in England who, at your instance, would not scruple to give misleading information to the press for the purpose of helping to cover your tracks. The little trick — very good in its way — will not pass current here. You are under arrest, doctor, and will have to leave at one o'clock for Pittsburgh. Have you any preparations to make for the journey?"

"Don't talk so loud; talk lower, please," implored Parker. "Half the town will be gazing at us. Let us go up stairs to my room, where we can arrange matters quietly."

He led the way, and the officer followed, slipping a revolver into a convenient pocket, to be in readiness in case the doctor should make any aggressive demonstration. As they passed in, Parker locked the door. Both took seats, and the colloquy was resumed.

"Permit me to inquire on what charge I am arrested."

"You are arrested, sir, for using the United States mails for the purpose of swindling certain persons in England."

"Have you a warrant?"

"No. But if it will be any accommodation to you, or serve

to relieve your feelings, I will step out and procure one. I consider my commission from the postmaster-general sufficient authority."

"Have you any objections to exhibiting your commission?"

"Not the least," replied the agent, handing him the document, which, after an attentive perusal, he returned, remarking that he did not wish to create excitement, and so would go along quietly, especially as he was sure he could establish his innocence, and return by the next train to Connellsburg.

The doctor then diverted the conversation into a new channel, showing remarkable familiarity with the detective systems of both England and America. He had carefully studied the subject in its wide ramifications, his perceptions being no doubt quickened by repeated encounters with officers of justice during the vicissitudes of his checkered career. On the sympathy supposed to exist between detectives and prisoners he dwelt with particular emphasis, citing instances to show where they had accepted an "honorable consideration" "to let up" on the unfortunate. Finding himself, however, in the hands of an officer impervious to hints and insensible to pathos, he prepared to submit with apparent grace to the inevitable, asking the agent, as a special favor, not to follow him so closely as to excite suspicion, and promising to make no attempt to escape. In return, he was allowed as full a measure of freedom as was consistent with security, and with that scrutiny of his movements which was needed to prevent the possible destruction of papers or other evidence.

Among other final preparations for departure, he wrote a letter to his wife in Chicago, and deposited it in the office. That no opportunity might be lost for picking up evidence which might prove useful at the trial, Mr. Myers quietly inclosed the communication in a second envelope, directed to the special agent located at Chicago, requesting him to deliver it to Mrs. Parker in person, and, if possible, to recover the *douceur* after she had enjoyed the perusal, the object being to

secure an authentic specimen of his handwriting. The stratagem was skillfully executed, the letter coming back in a few days to be added to other papers in the case.

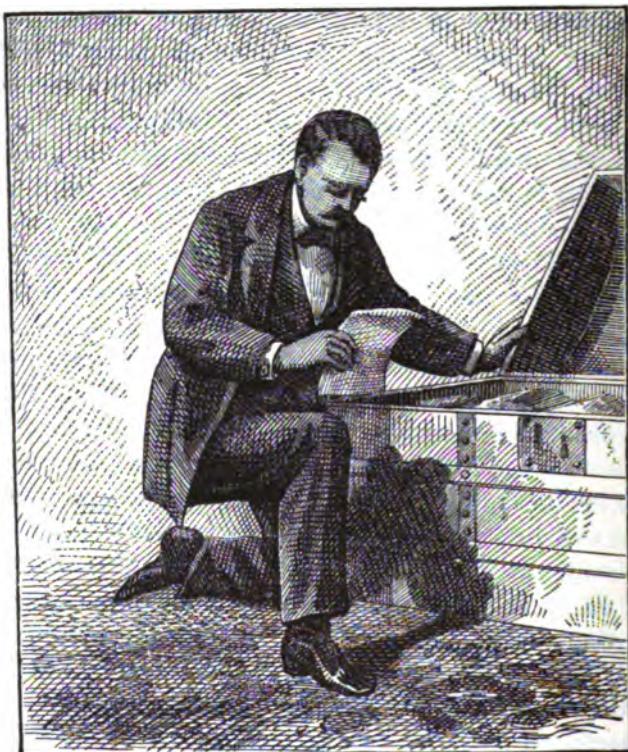
The special agent, accompanied by the postmaster at Connellsville and the prisoner, took the first train for Pittsburgh, meanwhile telegraphing United States Commissioner McCandless to await their arrival. After a brief statement of the leading facts of the case, Parker, in default of two thousand dollars bail, was committed for a further hearing on November 10th. On arriving at the jail, the United States marshal searched his person, finding a diamond ring, a new revolver, a gold watch, and sixty dollars in currency, but no papers.

While the moral evidence of Parker's guilt was so overwhelming as to leave no shadow of doubt in the mind of any one conversant with the facts already developed, the legal proof required in a court of law was still sadly incomplete. The government had possession of the letters written to Mrs. Whetham, and of the envelopes delivered to the doctor at Connellsville on the 25th of October, and immediately returned with the indorsement, "Opened by mistake. Wm. Parker." These constituted the sum total of the admissible bits of evidence thus far secured; and they would not withstand for ten minutes the onslaught of a skillful criminal lawyer. As yet there was no link to identify either of the letters received at Connellsville with the one containing the ten-pound draft, dispatched by Dr. Molesworth. Newspaper statements, however well founded, could not be brought to the attention of a jury. The preliminary examination, even if postponed, could not be deferred long; and should the prisoner pursue a bold and determined line of policy, the chances seemed greatly in favor of his escape. No time was to be lost in obtaining additional proofs.

Mr. Myers returned to Connellsville, and, equipped with the proper authority, thoroughly searched the effects of Parker, but failed to discover a single foreign letter addressed to him, or a scrap from his own pen which threw a scintilla of light

upon his operations. He then reported at head-quarters for further instructions.

The acting superintendent of foreign mails, at once wrote to the postmaster-general at London, requesting him to procure and forward the letters addressed by Parker to Dr. Molesworth and to Hon. Peter Taylor, M. P. Mr. Myers also sent a note to Moncure D. Conway, Esq., the well known



"Mr. Myers, equipped with the proper authority, thoroughly searches the effects of Parker."

London correspondent, who in a number of articles had manifested great interest in the exposure of the swindle, asking his aid in collecting evidence to be used at the trial.

While waiting for replies, the special agent retraced a portion of the ground covered by Parker, in order to learn the history of the Molesworth draft. It was known that he visited Uniontown about the middle of the month; and thither the agent accordingly followed. Among the arrivals at the Eagle Hotel for October 16th, appeared the entry "Dr. Parker and wife." Thence he proceeded to the National Bank, and was shown the following memorandum:—

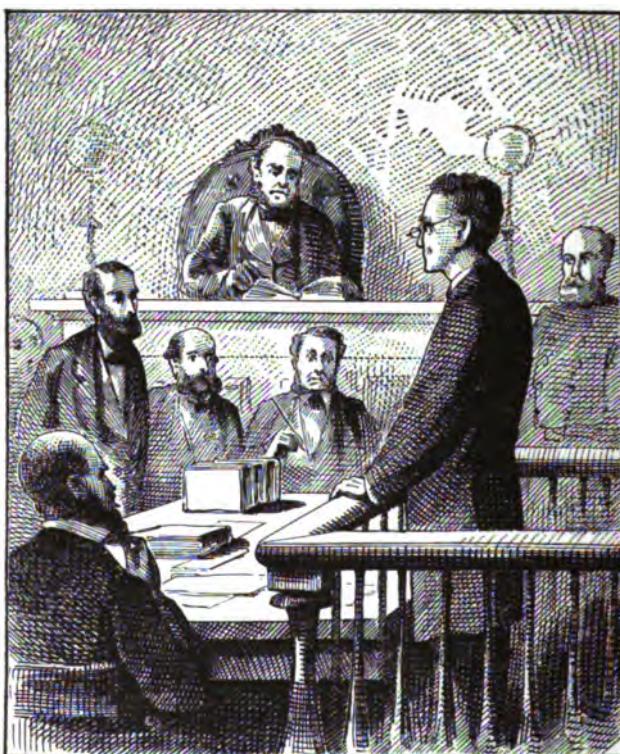
"Bill of exchange, No. 2456, Brown, Shipley & Co. of Liverpool, on Brown Brothers & Co., New York, dated 30th Sept., 1874, for ten pounds sterling, indorsed William Parker, cashed, Oct. 16, 1874, by A. C. Nutt, teller."

Mr. Nutt added that he knew Parker personally, and could identify his handwriting. On inspecting the Whetham letters, he at once recognized the writing as Parker's, and producing another from Parker to himself, pointed out the similarity.

By the 10th of November, though perhaps not fully prepared for the trial of the prisoner, the government was certainly in readiness for the preliminary examination. At three P. M. a large crowd had gathered to hear the testimony, including representatives of the press from Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, public curiosity having been excited by the extensive notoriety achieved by the doctor. While waiting for the proceedings to begin, Myers handed the prisoner a newspaper which came by mail from Chicago, and asked if it was not from his wife. He glanced at the writing and answered affirmatively. The wrapper was retained. It happened to be one of Parker's printed letter-heads, and ran thus: "William Parker, M. D., Connellsville, Pa., office hours from 7 to 8 A. M., 11 to 12 A. M., 8 to 9 P. M. ⚡ All bills considered due when services are rendered." This was the first time that any one connected with working up the case had seen or heard of any such letter-head, and they inferred that the sheets were used exclusively for foreign correspondence. In case letters written on similar paper should be returned from abroad, this would constitute

another link in the chain of evidence. In due time they came plentifully.

When the hour arrived, David Reed, Esq., United States district attorney, who conducted the prosecution, asked the prisoner if he wanted a hearing while his attorney, Mr. Reardon, was absent.



"The complete breakdown of the doctor took every one by surprise."

Prisoner. "Well, I don't know."

Mr. Reed. "You can waive a hearing if you please."

Prisoner (nervously). "I think I'll admit all, and give you no further trouble."

Mr. Reed. "You certainly don't mean to throw up the sponge?"

Prisoner. "Most assuredly I do."

District Attorney. "We will give you a chance anyhow."

The complete breakdown of the doctor took every one by surprise, as old offenders do not often give up so easily. After a brief presentation of the evidence for the government, the prisoner, in default of two thousand dollars bail,—the same amount as before,—was remanded to jail, to await trial at the next term of the court.

In compliance with the request of Mr. Myers, Mr. Moncure D. Conway, who had already given the public a copy of one of Parker's epistolary efforts, published a card in the London Times, November 18th, requesting all persons holding letters from Parker to forward them to him, No. 2 Pembroke Square. The card further stated that the swindler had been arrested in America, and that the prosecution desired to put the letters in evidence at the coming trial. The public responded with commendable promptness, and in a short time about twenty of these singular communications were sent to Mr. Conway from different parts of the kingdom. They were dated from the several towns in Ohio and Pennsylvania already mentioned, and were signed Winter Hamilton, M. D., Henry Leatham, M. D., and William Parker, M. D. All were in the same handwriting, and for the productions of an experienced operator quite monotonous in similarity to each other. With minor variations, the same pathetic story was told over and over, showing arid poverty of invention in one who boldly defied the laws for the purpose of making a livelihood by his wits.

Probably but a very small percentage of the letters actually written by him were returned by the recipients. Many had been destroyed, or forgotten. In numerous cases the credulous had been victimized, and when the exposure came kept silent, most people who have been duped shrinking from the admission of the fact as they would from the imputation of a crime.

From the collection, one of the longest and most elaborate is selected as a specimen of the lot. It is addressed to a family

of ladies, whom the doctor evidently credits with a love for the marvelous and romantic, as he proceeds to enlighten them in regard to a tragedy enacted in a distant branch of their family, which drove a relative of theirs into exile to die broken-hearted among strangers. It will be noticed that the writer, confused doubtless by the multitude of friendless wanderers who flocked to his house to breathe their last under the tender ministrations of himself and wife, commits a stupid blunder in names. Having described the fascinating youth as Edward Copland, he says, on coming down to business, "My bill for professional services to Mr. *Johnson* is one hundred and sixty-five dollars!" This slip must have prepared the minds of the readers to appreciate the usual peroration on the "avariciousness" of Americans, an imputation which he hurls back with patriotic scorn. The following is a copy:—

"CANAL FULTON, STARK COUNTY, OHIO, NORTH AMERICA, }
November 1, 1873.

"MMES. COPLAND, England.

"Dear Mesdames: Some three months ago, a young Englishman — Edward Copland — arrived in this town and fell sick. I was sent for and at once pronounced his case hopeless, telling him that if he had any business to settle, it must have his immediate attention. Turning on me a surprised and horrified look, he said, 'Doctor, am I going to die?' 'There is not a chance for you,' was my reply. 'Then,' said he, 'take me to your home, doctor. Nurse me while I do live; when I am dead, see that I am decently buried; and, on the word of a dying man, you shall be no loser for your kindness.' On making his request known to my wife, she granted it; and we took him to our home, nursed him with the tenderest care. Some time before his death, he asked for a lawyer, and I sent for my own. After their interview, Mr. Copland sent for me and made the following statement, which he desired me to transmit to you through the medium of the Reverend W. Gray. In reply to my inquiry why he did not write to one of you in particular and also direct, he simply stated that he had his reason for this course. 'Doctor, I am here the victim of a diabolical crime. Some years ago, a certain gentleman now living in England induced a young lady, to whom I was.

engaged to be married, to smell at some chloroform. The drug took swift effect upon her. Then, while she was insensible, he violated her person. As you may believe, the discovery of this drove me wild. I was thrown into a brain-fever, and lay for months between life and death. During my illness, the young lady died. On my recovery, I determined to leave England, and so sailed for this country, where I have since lived. I feel that I shall not live long, and I wish to say that I die at peace with God and man. The green grass is now growing over the grave of the poor dear girl I loved so tenderly, in the old churchyard in England, and it will soon be growing over mine. A stranger in a strange land, with no wife, no children, no friend to wipe the gathering death-sweat from my brow! My God! my God! what have I done that thou shouldest punish me so terribly?'

"The poor fellow here covered his face with his hands and wept bitterly. As soon as he had regained his composure, he continued: 'The Coplands are relatives of mine. The connection is a distant one; may be—probably is—unknown to them. I wish you to tell them that I desire them to pay you for your attention to me; and further, to tell them that they shall be rewarded for so doing. I could pay you now by making a sacrifice; but if you will only wait till your letter can go to England, I think Miss Copland will pay you, and my estate will be saved a loss. Tell Miss Copland they shall have good reason to be thankful for having complied with my request.'

"Of course I granted his request. My acquaintance with Mr. Copland had convinced me he was incapable of fraud; and my experience as a physician has convinced me that men won't lie when face to face with death. I have stood at many deathbed sides, seen many masks pulled off, but I have never seen the man who would lie after death had seized him. My bill for professional services to Mr. Johnson is one hundred and sixty-five dollars; his funeral expenses were one hundred and thirty-five dollars, equal to three hundred dollars, or sixty pounds your money.

"I must say I never saw a more painful case than his, nor one which more interested my sympathies. Poor young man!—a gentleman unmistakably by birth, by education, and by fortune,—to go down to an unknown grave, be buried a stranger, by a stranger, among strangers! pitiful to contemplate, really. Die, too, broken-hearted. Of course

I suppose that you know this Mr. Copland; but if you should not, I will give you a description of him, so that his identification must be easy. Twenty-eight years old, rather above the middle height, rather of a slight figure, oval face, regular features, blue eyes, fair complexion, light hair, appearance and manners those of a cultured, refined, high-bred man. He never spoke of his business or profession, though I have no doubt he was either a minister of the church of England, or had been educated for one, he was so well acquainted with all matters relating to the church. He surprised me by telling me that you were the 'patrons' of Mr. Gray's church. I had always had the impression that the church in England, being united to the state, had its ministers appointed by the government. I was not surprised to hear that Mr. Gray's income was only some one hundred and fifty or two hundred pounds a year. Not the wages of a skilled mechanic in this country. Mr. Copland made a will, which I attested. I don't know that I violate any confidence when I tell you that your interest will be subserved by complying with his request. This will, with a large package of legal documents, his watch and chain, ring, and some other articles of personal jewelry, are now in the care of my lawyer, H. Chambers, who will retain them until I hear from you, after which they will be sent to England.

"I have Mr. Copland's Bible. I frequently caught him weeping over it, and I noticed every time that it was the fly-leaf that he was reading. On examining the book after his death, I found the following lines written in an exquisite lady's hand on the fly-leaf:—

"Remember, love, who gave you this,
When other days shall come,
When she who had thine earliest kiss
Sleeps in her narrow home;
Remember 'twas a mother gave
The gift to one she'd die to save."

"*August 19, 1860, Oxford.*

Your MOTHER.'

"It is to be hoped that 'mother' is sleeping in her narrow home, that her poor heart may never have to bleed over the cruel fate that befell her boy. Poor fellow! Well, the Lord knows what is best for us all; but verily his ways are inscrutable. Your poor friend bore his sufferings with the utmost patience and fortitude. The gentleness and sweetness of his disposition endeared him to us all very much. We employed an old colored woman, who was once a

slave, to assist us in nursing him. She would often say to me, 'Laws, Massa Doctor, I jis lubs dat chile, Massa Copland. No use you tryin' to cure him, massa. He's jis a-gwine to hebb'en — he is. Me t'inks he too good for dis world.' Last Saturday night, at half past eleven, he died, holding my hand. His last words were, 'It is dark.'

"It is generally hard for an American to read without a smile the remarks of some English travelers on our avariciousness. I think you will allow that my wife and I acted to your friend in full keeping with the old golden rule, 'Do as you would be done by.' A stranger, we sheltered him; sick, we nursed him. No; that criticism — avaricious — is ungenerous, unjust, untrue. To call the American people avaricious, is just as discriminating and just as base as to call the English people mean. John Bull and Brother Jonathan never refuse an appeal to their charity; and, thank Heaven! they have abundant means to do it with. They do very much as the Yankee woman did, who was famous for the excellence of her rhubarb pies. Being asked how she made such good pies, she answered, she put in as much sugar as her conscience would allow, and then shut her eyes and put in a handful more. So English and Americans give all their conscience approves, and then add a handful without counting it.

"Good, kind, strong mother for all. God bless old England!

"I am yours very faithfully,

"WINTER HAMILTON, M. D."

One more short extract from the voluminous pile of correspondence must suffice. It is from a letter addressed to Rev. Joseph Mann, of Wellington Vicarage, Yorkshire, dated Canton, Ohio, and signed "Winter Hamilton, M. D." Foregoing, with customary generosity, all claim for medical attendance and nursing, he solicits the return of one hundred and twenty dollars, the amount of the funeral expenses of the distant relative of Mr. Mann, who, after many tempestuous tossings, had found at last a resting-place under his roof.

"I felt very much interested in the poor fellow. I did for him all I could; but the case was hopeless when I first saw him. I notice that English travelers in America are wont to charge us Americans

with avariciousness, caring for nothing but the almighty dollar. I think you must allow that myself and wife have acted to your friend in full keeping with the gospel rule, 'Do as you would be done by.' He had no books, no papers, no clothes with him. He told me he had had to leave everything belonging to him in pawn for board in New York. His only shirt was marked, I think, Charles N. Mann, but the middle character was so worn as to be hardly distinguishable. He received the attentions of our minister here with thankfulness; and on the day he died he told my wife that he was not afraid to die, that he knew and felt his sins forgiven, and would rather die than live. He was very reticent about his history; said nothing about his business or profession. He had a delicate white hand, evidently unaccustomed to manual labor. His manners were gentlemanly, with something of feminine refinement about them. He told me that he had taken his degree at some other college than yours. You, he believed, was a Cambridge graduate; you must have lived at Kellington some thirty or thirty-five years. If you have got copies of the two sermons you preached, and of the two letters which you also printed, I should be glad to see them."

When the arrest was made known, other parties in England aided in furnishing evidence. Dr. Molesworth made oath before the United States consul at Manchester concerning the draft for ten pounds remitted to Parker. Brown, Shipley & Co., of Liverpool, sent a copy of the same, duly certified to.

This swindler of many *aliases* is evidently about fifty years old, tall, and compactly built, with an appearance of intelligence and shrewdness. An Englishman by birth, he claims to have graduated at the college of Dublin; but little is known of his early life, as he is very reserved in talking about his antecedents. He came to this country in 1862; shortly after, according to his own story, entering the navy as hospital steward under an assumed name, and serving in the squadron of Farragut till the close of the war. While thus engaged, he invented a new and "improved" method of short-hand writing, which he subsequently taught, acting at the same time as traveling agent for sundry life-insurance companies and literary papers. After roaming about the country a number of years,

the prototype perhaps of the friendless stranger who afterwards figured so prominently in his foreign correspondence, he decided to settle down in the State of Ohio ; and in pursuance of that resolution, married in 1870 an estimable wife, the daughter of a wealthy family of Massillon. The heartless adventurer ingratiated himself with the unsuspecting lady by representing that he was heir to an immense estate in England, which at no distant day they would enjoy together. She knows little of his life previous to marriage, and nothing whatever of his family connections. He is well fitted to impose successfully on the unwary, possessing an attractive person and agreeable manners, and, in addition to a knowledge of the classics, speaking French and German fluently. The gifts shamefully perverted to the low uses of deceit might easily have won for him an honorable place among men. Various minor incidents indicate that he had served a long apprenticeship as a swindler, having doubtless fled from England because the island had become too hot to hold him longer. When apprehended, he was on the point of taking a fresh departure, and had that event been postponed twenty-four hours, the prison might again have been cheated of its dues.

On the 6th of May, 1875, Parker was brought before the United States court at Pittsburgh for trial, six indictments having been found against him by the grand jury. When asked if he was ready, he replied through counsel that he would plead guilty and pray the mercy of the court, whereupon he was sentenced to imprisonment for eighteen months on one indictment, while sentence upon the remainder was suspended.

There is no way — except through the confession of the swindler, which is not likely to throw much light on the mystery for some time to come — for determining how much money Parker managed to extort by his various epistolary appeals. The sum must have been considerable in the aggregate, for he lived and traveled in good style, and the revenues to sustain the expenditure were doubtless derived in large measure from this source, as the occupation of teaching the

new system of short-hand was evidently taken up as a blind to cover more occult operations, rather than as a means of livelihood.

While in nearly, if not quite every instance he aimed, by references to the property and will of the unhappy stranger so tenderly cared for by himself and wife, to awaken expectations of handsome returns in the minds of correspondents in England, they seem, in the cases where the motives are revealed, to have yielded more to the suggestions of sympathy and pity than to the hope of gain.

Beguiled by Worms.



THE serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

On the day before Christmas, 1875, a note from the Executive Mansion was received at the post-office department, requesting, in the absence of the postmaster-general, the presence of the chief special agent. On repairing to the White House, that officer was informed by the President that a bold and successful swindle had lately been consummated through the real or pretended use of the mails, and that, as his own name had been dragged into the matter by the perpetrator, he especially desired that steps

should be immediately taken with the view of detecting and punishing the guilty party. After a brief *r  sum  * of the salient facts, the President referred him to his own informant, a gentleman from the West, who was familiar with the details of the transaction.

The following day the officer met the gentleman in question, who proceeded to state the case so far as it had come to his knowledge, and volunteered an occasional opinion to explain some point where absence of proof left room for conjecture.

It appeared that about the middle of the previous October a stranger arrived at the "Arctic," a caravansary in a large



"In the parlor of the proprietor his position soon became established as a familiar and favorite visitor."

western city, and registered as "C. Worms, Washington, D. C." As the proprietor was of German parentage, while the guest spoke French and German fluently, an acquaintance sprung up between them which rapidly ripened into intimacy. The progress of the stranger in insinuating himself into the

good graces of the family was further facilitated by attentions to the children, and by compliments, apparently hearty and appreciative, bestowed upon the musical accomplishments of the wife. In the parlor of the proprietor his position soon became established as a familiar and favorite visitor.

As the days rolled by, the *habitués* of the hotel began to wonder who the stranger could be, and what object could have brought him to the city. No one knew his business, and he appeared in no haste to make disclosures. Beyond the fact that he was absent from the house a part of each day, and occasionally till late at night, nothing transpired to indicate the character of his calling. Several times he inquired at the desk for the addresses of prominent citizens with whom he claimed to have engagements; but as the persons named represented a variety of pursuits, the nature of his business with them could not be imagined.

Thus three weeks slipped past; the landlord good-naturedly permitting the bill of the curious man with the curious name to go unpaid beyond the regular term of such indulgence. But the period was approaching when attentions and compliments could no longer be made to perform the functions of greenbacks, the impending crisis being foreshadowed in the elongated features and waning cordiality of the host. Accustomed to interpret the storm-signals that flame from the human face, the mysterious guest recognized the necessity of drawing aside the veil. As a prelude, he accordingly informed the proprietor, in a confidential whisper, that he was an "Inspector of the Interior Department for Indian Supplies," and that having nearly completed the business which called him to the West, he expected to return to Washington in a few days. He further stated that during the war he had served in the Federal army as assistant quartermaster with the rank of captain, and that the enjoyments of his present sojourn in the city had been greatly heightened by the generous hospitalities of old army friends, whom he now met for the first time since they lived together on the tented field.

The conversation then drifted off into general matters, with an occasional reference to the Indian supply business, designed to whet the appetite of the listener. The names of several distinguished generals then stationed there, and of prominent residents with whom he assumed to be on terms of close intimacy, were incidentally mentioned, as if the association would be recognized as a matter of course. These allusions had the effect of establishing the speaker in the estimation of the landlord as a man of official distinction and high social standing.

Leaving the seed to germinate over night, the captain the next day cautiously reopened the subject by alluding to the kind treatment received from the family of the landlord, and by expressing the hope that he might soon have an opportunity to reciprocate in some substantial manner. Already the adventurer had succeeded in winning the confidence of his intended victim, and it only remained to lubricate the approaches to the trap into which he hoped soon to decoy him. He inquired, in an easy, familiar manner, how it was that a young man possessing so much ability and energy could consent to keep a public house, with its cares, and risks, and responsibilities, when other ways were open for making money so much more easily and rapidly?

"What do you mean?" inquired the host, thoroughly on the alert.

"Why don't you get one government contract for furnishing goods to the Indians?" replied the supposed inspector, in a low, confidential, insinuating whisper.

"I don't see how that is possible," answered the landlord; "I have no influence to secure favors of this sort. Besides, I suppose a large bond would be required. Is it not so?"

"Dat be shust were you ish mistakeen," replied the tempter. "You does not need much monish at all. Five tousand dollar will fix you all right for contract for two hundred tousand."

"Five thousand dollars is a large sum for a poor man, and I haven't that amount," answered the landlord.

"I'se sorry for dat," responded the stranger. "I very much like to help you in dis way. May be you got some friends can lend you de monish. How ish dat?"

"Perhaps," said the young man, reflectively, "I might manage to raise the money; but I have no acquaintances in Washington to help me, and wouldn't know how to go about the business."

"Don't you bodder yourself about dat," argued the mysterious guest. "You raise de monish, and leave all dat to me. I fix him shust as easy as turn my hand over, shure. Vhy, I knows all dem fellahs down dere. I knows de President, Secretary Chandler, General Cowen — all de big men. Vhy, I lives right next door to General Cowen in Georgetown. I has big influence wid all dem men. I do shust what I please."

"My father-in-law might let me have the funds," answered the host, weakening. "Suppose that you should speak to him on the subject."

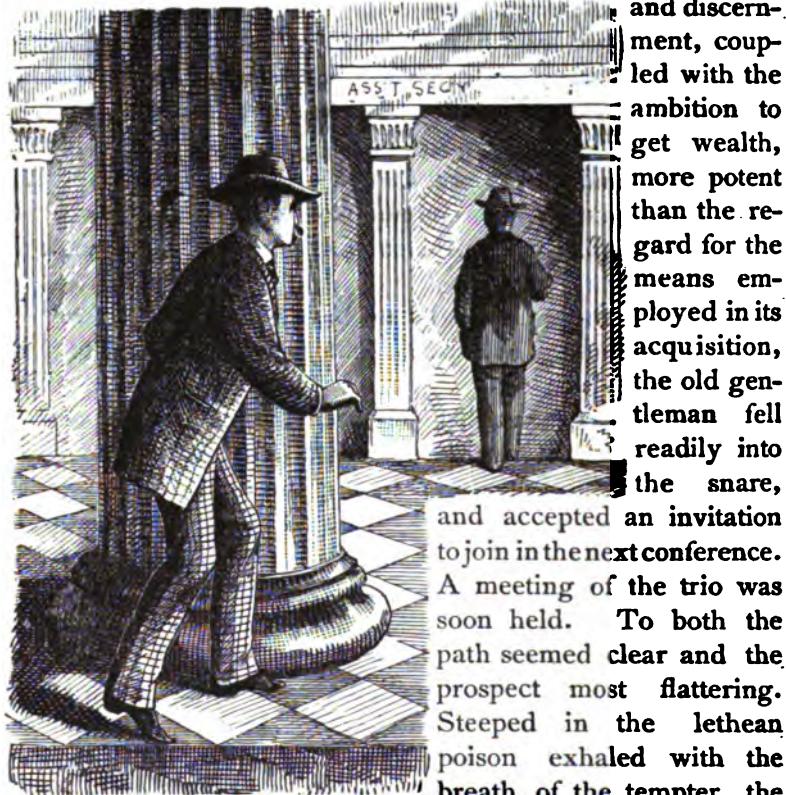
"I don't know about dat," objected the man of influence. "I like to do you dis favor because you treats me so goot since I been here; but I don't like taking outside parties into dis business." However, if you say it be all right, I goes and see him."

"Of course it is perfectly safe," answered the landlord. "He is my father-in-law, and will help me in any way he reasonably can. He is very well off, too."

"Well den, I sees him," replied the guest, as if with some reluctance; "but I does so on what you say. I wouldn't have dis get out for noting. As officer of de government I am not allowed to do dis, but we all go outside vonce in a while to help a friend. You know how dat be yousef. Of course I has no interest in dis business but to help you, and dat ish all right. Only outside people might talk, and I lose my place, shure. Mine Got! I wouldn't have dis get out for de world. It would shust raise h— wid me. Peoples dey puts de worst look alvays on what a fellah does for a friend."

" You can talk with my father-in-law just as freely as you can with me," said the landlord. " If he is satisfied there is money in it, he may make the advance."

Worms lost no time in seeking out the father-in-law, and in explaining, in the strictest confidence, the scheme already presented to the son. Unfortunately, through lack of education



"Quickenning his steps, he came up in time to see the familiar figure of his friend disappear through the entrance to one of the rooms."

and discernment, coupled with the ambition to get wealth, more potent than the regard for the means employed in its acquisition, the old gentleman fell readily into the snare, and accepted an invitation to join in the next conference. A meeting of the trio was soon held. To both the path seemed clear and the prospect most flattering. Steeped in the lethean poison exhaled with the breath of the tempter, the victims, after a brief discussion, entered into the arrangement, the father

agreeing to advance the money and take a half interest in the business. The five thousand dollars were soon secured in the form of a draft on a bank in Washington city.

On the 18th of November, Worms, accompanied by his dupe, started for the national capital. On the route the business was fully discussed and an understanding reached, whereby the intermediary was to receive a fat percentage of the profits in payment for his "official influence." Incidentally the captain alluded to the unsettled hotel-bill, and explained his negligence in not calling for it by the statement that he had been on an extended inspection tour, and had temporarily run short of funds. The matter should be attended to in a few days. The apology was hardly required, for what cared the prospective millionaire for a few paltry dollars due from the best and most potent of benefactors?

Meanwhile the embryo contractor, with grateful heart and generous purse, defrayed the expenses of the journey, continuing to act as banker during the entire period of their companionship.

Arriving at Washington, the pair put up at an obscure hotel. The next morning Worms gave notice that he should visit the department of the interior to procure the contract, and requested his companion to await his return. During the last few hours, however, the customary hardihood of the operator had given place to manifest nervousness and anxiety. A vague suspicion crept into the mind of the young man that after all he might perhaps be the victim of a cheat. Instead of remaining behind, he accordingly followed the receding form of the captain at a safe distance, and, after going a number of blocks, saw him enter a massive marble building which he learned, on inquiry at the door, to be the department of the interior. Quickening his steps, he came up in time to see the familiar figure of his friend disappear through the entrance to one of the rooms, which was found from the inscription over the portal to be the office of the assistant secretary. Reassured by the circumstance, the dupe returned to the hotel to wait impatiently for the return of the "inspector," little dreaming that in pursuing his steps in disregard of instructions he had done just what the swindler expected and desired.

In the course of an hour or two the captain reappeared, evidently in high spirits—a fact readily accounted for when he reported that he had obtained a first-class contract, better, in fact, than he had any previous reason to expect, and out of which thousands could be made. "But," continued he, "we must get out of dis town right off. De devil is to pay at de interior department. Dey's having investigations and every tam ting you can tink of. Everybody is vatched, you bet. If dey see you and me togeder, and find out you is contractor, dey tink someting wrong right off, and dat knock our business in a cock hat, shure. We got to go to Philadelphia right avay. I got it all fix to have de papers sent to me dere. Den you sign de contract, and return it wid de monish to de President. He vill approve de contract, and send it back. De monish he vill keep till de goots are all furnished, and den you vill get it again."

Highly exhilarated at the prospect, the young man now converted his draft into ten new five hundred dollar notes. Having accomplished all that could be done in Washington, the friends left by the next train for the Quaker City, and took quarters at a small hotel on Walnut Street much resorted to by Germans.

After breakfast the next morning, Worms directed one of the call-boys to go to the post-office and inquire for letters for "Captain Charles Worms." The messenger soon returned with the report that there was a letter there to that address, but the clerk would not give it up without an order. Manifesting considerable disgust at the stringent regulations of the office, the captain set forth to secure the trophy in person, and soon returned with a large sealed envelope, bearing the card of the interior department. The missive was opened in the presence of both, and was found to contain a written paper purporting to be a contract, a light buff-colored envelope, bearing the address "U. S. Grant, Washington, D. C.," a United States Treasury check for two hundred thousand dollars, payable to the order of

Charles Worms, and a general letter of instructions in reference to the business.

The following is a correct copy, with the names of the victims omitted :—

*"Contract to supply the Indians, awarded to — — —
and — — —.*

"Special Order
No. 761.

"INTERIOR DEPARTMENT,
"WASHINGTON, D. C., November 18th, 1875.

"Articles of agreement made and entered into, this 18th day of November, anno domini, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-five, between Gen'l G. L. Cowen, Assistant Secretary of Interior, an officer of the United States, of the one part, and N—— and K—— of ———, of the second part.

"This agreement witnesseth that the said Gen'l G. L. Cowen, for and on behalf of the United States of America, and the said N—— and K——, heirs, executors and administrators, have covenanted and agreed, and by these presents do mutually covenant and agree to and with each other as follows: 1st. That the said N—— and K——, heirs, executors and administrators, shall supply or cause to be supplied and issued at ———, at the office of the Inspector of Indian Affairs, articles hereinafter specified, that shall be required for the use of Indians :

" 100,000 — One hundred thousand flannel shirts	@ \$1.24
100,000 — One hundred thousand pairs drawers	" .70
30,000 — Thirty thousand pairs boots	" 3.90
50,000 — Fifty thousand pairs shoes — brogans	" 2.45
100,000 — One hundred thousand pairs socks	" .33
50,000 — Fifty thousand woolen blankets — pair	" 4.90
10,000 — Ten thousand rubber pouches	" 2.63
30,000 — Thirty thousand trowsers	" 3.98
50,000 — Fifty thousand rubber blankets	" 2.15

"Tis articles shall be received in the city of ———, and inspected by Capt. Chas. Worms, Inspector of this Department.

"Payment shall be made by the Inspector's vouchers weekly or monthly.

"This contract will be in force two months from date.
"No member of Congress shall be admitted to any share herein,
or any benefit to arise therefrom.

"In witness whereof the undersigned place their hands and seals:

(Signed) "N—
"K—, per N—, per power of attorney.

"CHAS. WORMS, *Inspector.*

"Z. CHANDLER, *Secretary.*

"EXECUTIVE MENTION,
"WASHINGTON D. C. Nov. 18, 1875.

"Approved:"

After reading the document, the extraordinary appearance and phraseology of which failed to excite in his inexperienced mind any suspicion of its genuineness, the victim signed the paper both for himself and for his father-in-law as attorney. Worms also appended his own euphonious name as "inspector."

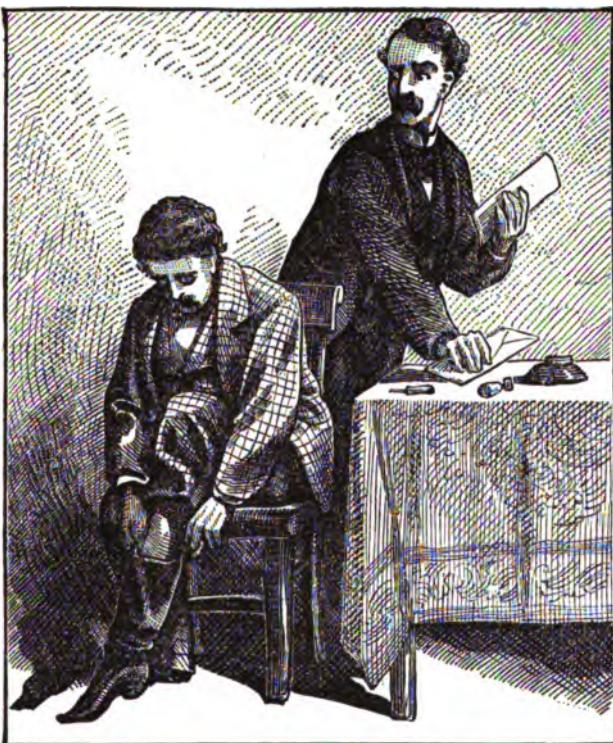
Here it fortunately occurred to the youth, who was about to risk so much on the venture, that he ought to keep a copy of the instrument for future reference, and he accordingly made a verbatim transcript as exhibited above. He even had the discernment to see that "executive mention" should have been written "executive m-a-n-s-i-o-n," and that "Tis" before articles should have been "these." On hazarding the bold criticism, he was told that as a foreigner drew up the paper, such mistakes were liable to occur.

It is proper to remark, in passing, that contracts for Indian supplies are never made either by the secretary or assistant secretary of the interior. The affair submitted by Worms bears about as much resemblance to one of the genuine forms as the Choctaw language bears to Sanscrit. That a tolerably intelligent man was duped by so transparent a cheat illustrates that perennial marvel—the capacity of human nature for being humbugged.

The landlord, happy in the contemplation of prospective

wealth, proceeded to draw off his boot in which the five thousand dollars had been placed for safe-keeping. The money with the contract was inclosed in the envelope directed to "U. S. Grant, Washington, D. C., " and sealed in the usual manner.

Worms suggested, that, owing to the great value of the



"'Dat be not necessary,' answered the captain, gyrating around the table."

inclosure, the envelope should be sealed in five places with wax. The proposition favorably struck his companion, who stooped over to draw on his boot preparatory to going for the material, and remarked, "I suppose I shall have to step down to the office for it."

"Dat be not necessary," answered the captain, gyrating

around the table ; "I has such frequent use for dem tings in sealing official documents that I always carry dem wid me ;" at the same time drawing a piece of wax from his pocket, and passing it to his companion, who at this juncture had just completed the process of pulling on his boot.

Together they sealed the envelope in five places, each seal being impressed with a private stamp carried by the operator, not only for greater security, but also, as he alleged, to insure instant attention at the White House. The missive was then taken to the post-office by the unsuspecting dupe, and duly registered, the receipt bearing date November 20, 1875.

The same day the contractor and his patron proceeded to New York, and took quarters at the St. Denis Hotel, registering under assumed names at the suggestion of Worms, to avoid annoyance from dealers in Indian supplies, who would be sure to overrun him the moment they learned he was in the city. On Monday, the 22d, the captain went down town alone to deposit the check for two hundred thousand dollars, received with other papers already enumerated through the post-office at Philadelphia. On returning he exhibited on a printed form what purported to be a certificate of deposit from the sub-treasury for the full amount.

As the victim was thoroughly plucked, the time had now come for shaking him off. Accordingly, by the advice of the "inspector," he proceeded in hot haste to Boston to examine certain goods required under the terms of the contract, the captain remaining behind to await the arrival of important papers from the department. Not long after reaching "the Hub," he received the following dispatch :—

"**N**EW **Y**ORK, Nov. 23d, 1875.

"**T**hings mixed. **R**eturn to ——. **W**ill meet you there.

"**C.** **W.**"

On receipt of the telegram, the newly-fledged dealer in Indian supplies returned home to resume the humble round

of cares from which, as he fondly hoped, the magnificent projects of his benefactor were soon to emancipate him. A few days later he was instructed, if not cheered, by an auto-graph note, whereof the following is a copy :—

" NEW YORK, November 27.

" FRIEND N—— in short, evere thing will be all wright; don't bodder your selfs. Tell K—— that evere thing will be setlet in short compliment to gus.

" Yours truly

" CAPTAIN

" W

"P. S. I leave for W. to neight, and from there God nows were ; I think Chicago."

Meanwhile a registered letter of the official size, post-marked Philadelphia, Nov. 20, and imposingly sealed with wax in five places, arrived by due course of mail at the Executive Mansion. When opened, it was found to contain nothing but twenty or more strips of newspaper cut promiscuously from the sheet, without reference to continuity of matter, and bearing no obvious relation to each other ; no writing whatever accompanied the clippings by way of explanation. The inclosure was examined by the President and his secretary, and was supposed to have been sent by some crazy person, as somewhat similar missives previously received had been uniformly credited to freaks of insanity.

Having waited a month in vain for the coming of Worms, and hearing nothing from either contract or money, the hotel proprietor reluctantly reached the conclusion that "things were mixed," and dispatched a friend to Washington to see the President, and learn, if possible, the fate of the five thousand dollars.

When General Grant learned the real character of the mysterious letter received several weeks before, he took the steps already referred to for the discovery and apprehension of the

swindler, directing that the chase should be vigorously pushed. The chief special agent immediately telegraphed to Mr. Thos. P. Shallcross, an officer of great experience and skill, to come on and take charge of the investigation. Mr. Z. L. Tidball was also specially deputized to co-operate with him in the work. In the presence of these gentlemen the representative of the victim carefully went over the entire ground, again repeating the story as communicated to him.

It was his opinion, based on the information received from his principal, that Worms had a confederate either in the Philadelphia or Washington post-office, through whose connivance a spurious letter was substituted for the genuine. The prospective contractor maintained that so sharp was his watch that the trick could not have been performed in the interval between the inclosure of the money and the time when he took the letter from the room to be registered. The officers thought differently, but none the less explored every possible theory, putting conjecture to the test of fact.

In the absence of definite data, they reasoned that a swindler who operated with so much adroitness on a scale of such magnitude would be prepared to execute every part of the scheme without recourse to an accomplice, particularly as success depended far more on the credulity of the victim than on the intricacy of the imposture. A needless copartnership would diminish the profits and enhance the chances of discovery. Besides, there was a strong antecedent improbability that a cheat would make a corrupt and felonious arrangement with a postal registry-clerk, in prospect of a contingency so unlikely to arise.

All the facts as developed justified the first conceptions of the officers. The letter was mailed in the busiest part of the day, when numbers were waiting their turn at the window. It was inclosed with half a dozen others in the packet for Washington, which was duly sealed with wax, and dispatched by the first mail. Several employés of unquestioned integrity were present during the entire process.

For reasons too obvious to require explanation, the theory that the substitution might have been made in the post-office at Washington seemed still more unreasonable. The swindler unquestionably exchanged the package containing the money and contract, for another exactly resembling it in size and external appearance, while his companion was pulling on his boot before the work of sealing began.

At this time none of the parties on the trail knew whence Worms came, or whither he had gone. Guided by his own assertion that he had served in the Union army, special agent Tidball called at the war department, and through the courtesy of the adjutant-general was permitted to examine the records.

It appeared that "Charles Worms" enlisted as commissary sergeant in the Fifty-Eighth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry, October 7, 1861, and served until January 18, 1862, when he was commissioned second lieutenant, and subsequently first lieutenant of company K of the same regiment. February 26, 1863, he was appointed by President Lincoln an assistant quartermaster of volunteers, with the rank of captain, and assigned to duty with the Eleventh Corps, Army of the Potomac, and was afterward transferred to the Department of the Gulf, where he served in New Orleans and vicinity till the close of the war.

From data furnished by the victimized landlord, as supplemented by information obtained from the records of the war department, the following accurate description of Worms was prepared by the officers, and published in circular form.

"Born in Lille, France; about fifty-two years old; five feet six inches high; stout built; weighs about 180 or 190 pounds; dark complexion; brown eyes; black hair, mixed with gray; moustache; uses snuff and often coughs; a white sediment or matter collects in the corners of his eyes every hour or so; talks a great deal of women, and is fond of card-playing; frequents German play-houses, and might be found there at almost any time; wears gold watch and vest-chain, with foreign gold coin charm set in a twisted border or rim; wears plain gold ring on small finger of left hand; wears eye-glasses, black bows, and when not in use is in the habit of toying with them; speaks French fluently but with a German accent, and is a good German scholar; he has much the appearance of a Jew and would

hardly be taken for anything else ; styles himself "doctor" or "captain ;" has small thick feet ; when last seen wore tongue-boots, left one cut to relieve a swelling of the instep."

So far as could be learned, Worms had long before disappeared below the mental horizon of every one about Washington. He was not and never had been employed by the interior department as inspector of Indian supplies. At the war department, the generation that once enjoyed personal knowledge of him had passed away. He seemed to have returned after the lapse of many years like a lost comet, and to have vanished as suddenly as he came.

At first the officers surmised that he had probably left the country by way of New York city. Thither they accordingly started on the first day of January, 1876, stopping at Philadelphia to visit the German hotel on Walnut Street, the surroundings of which were found to correspond with the description in their hands, but nothing of value could be gleaned there.

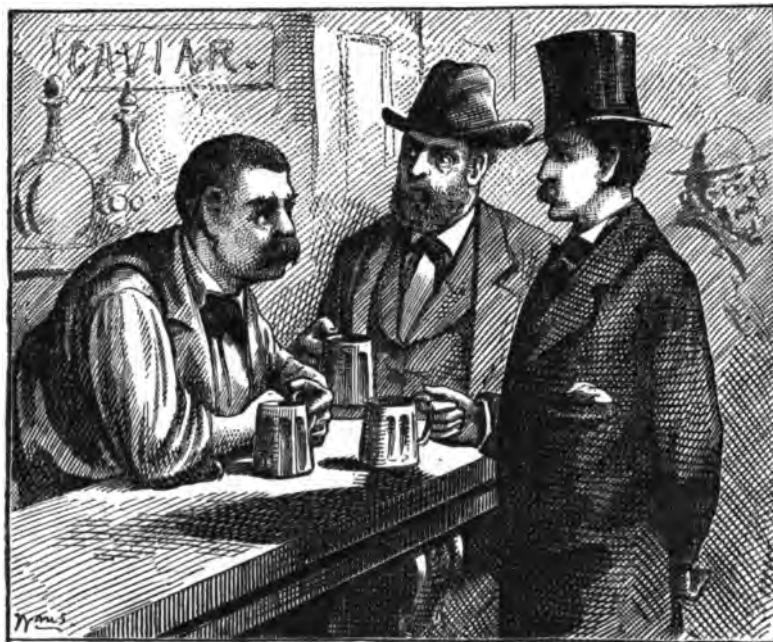
On arriving in New York city, the officers began to hunt for the fugitive with unrelenting vigor, though possessing no tangible clue to work from. Apprehensive that the swindler had exchanged his ill-gotten greenbacks for gold and fled to Europe, they called at the various banking-houses that deal in foreign exchange, but could find no record which seemed to meet the conditions of the supposed transaction. All the foreign shipping offices were visited, and the several lists of passengers sailing between November 22d and January 1st carefully examined, but the vermicular name was nowhere to be seen. A description of the peculiar appearance and manners of the missing man failed to recall the sinister physiognomy to any of the officials of the steamship companies.

The city directory — that thesaurus of weighty information — was then resorted to. The Worms family was found to be numerously represented among the denizens of the metropolis, several sons of the house rejoicing in the initial "C." The

owners were hunted down, and their separate identity from the original and genuine successively established.

The register of the St. Denis verified the statements of the victim, but did not further illumine the darkness. The prospect did not wear a cheerful look.

During the day spent together in New York, Worms took his companion to a German restaurant near the Grand Central



"Yas, yas," ruminated the tapster, "I mind 'im now. Talk much, didn't he, 'bout bein' a soldier? Talk very big."

Depot, where the affectionate twain indulged in frequent potations and heart-disclosing hilarity. Fortunately the dupe who paid the score retained the business card of the establishment. Thither the officers went on a voyage of discovery, not sanguine of success, but resolved to leave no possible source of information unexplored. The proprietor, a good-natured Dutchman, did not know Captain Worms, and had

never heard of such a personage. Strangers came and went, drank and talked, but he asked no questions.

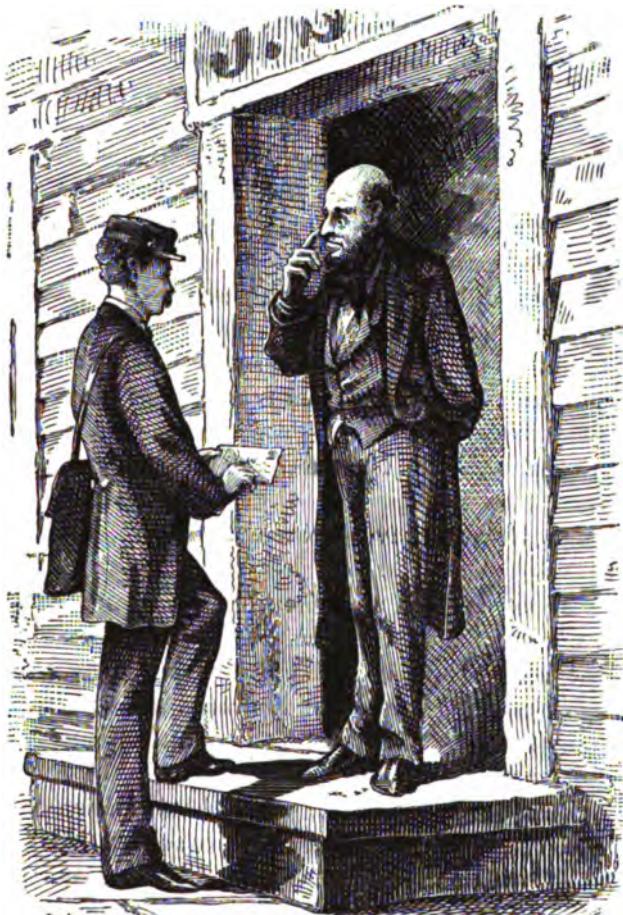
However, the persistent efforts of the special agents to refresh the memory of the host succeeded at length in recalling the faded lineaments of the ex-quartermaster. "Yas, yas," ruminated the tapster, "I mind 'im now. Talk much, didn't he, 'bout bein' a soldier, an' fightin' in de wars? Had tall man wid 'im. Talk very big."

By dint of much mental effort the proprietor succeeded in recollecting fragments of the conversation that passed between the hilarious companions. Worms mentioned an old army comrade whom he proposed to call upon. The gentleman lived up the river, but was employed in a large establishment down town. As nearly as he could remember it, the German gave the officers the name, and though a mere hint of the real name, the resemblance in sound enabled them to find the person to whose former acquaintance the swindler had boastfully referred. He proved to be a gentleman of intelligence and character, who served with distinction during the war, and who had no concealments to make in the interest of the associate that had turned out so badly.

He had not seen Worms for a long time — in fact, had almost forgotten the existence of such a man. The ex-quartermaster returned from New Orleans with considerable money, and after a time formed a copartnership in a retail mercantile house with an Israelite, who, for convenience, may be called "J. Schmidt." Matters did not prosper, however. Ere long, the concern mounted skyward in flame and smoke, under circumstances of such suspicion that, at the instance of the insurers, the partners were arrested for arson. After considerable litigation, the trouble was finally compromised, when the supposed incendiary quit the city. For five or six years the gentleman had neither seen nor heard of him.

Then began the hunt for the former partner. By further reference to the directory, the line of "J. Schmidts," stretch-

ing up and down in serried columns, seemed too formidable for investigation in the short period allotted to a single life. Old volumes were exhumed, and after patient search it was



"But I ha'f no writteen autoritee, remonstrated J. S."

found that one member of the illustrious tribe lived on the same street and at the same number where a "C. Worms" had resided several years before. Interpreted in the light

of facts already known, the coincidence connected the two men as the probable partners. Through the agency of a shrewd letter-carrier, the correctness of the surmise was soon established. This party unquestionably knew where the fugitive could be found, and it was desirable to make the knowledge available without needless delay.

Thoroughly instructed by the special agents, the letter-carrier in the round of duty again reaches the door of "J. Schmidt," and proceeds to interview the proprietor. "Will you be kind enough to tell me," he inquired, "where I can find Captain Charles Worms. He used to live here, and I have a valuable letter for him."

"Give it me, and I send it him," responded J. Schmidt. "He no live here any more."

"But I can't," responded the carrier. "It is a registered letter, and I must have his written receipt, as I am responsible for it."

"I sign receipt for de Capteen," proposed the former partner in bland tones.

"You can if you have written authority," replied the carrier.

"But I haf no writteen audoritee," remonstrated J. S.

"Well, then," argued the carrier, "you had better give me his present address, and it will be forwarded to him direct from the post-office. Otherwise it must be sent to Washington, and may be lost. The letter may contain money, or be of great importance, you know."

The habitual caution of the son of Abraham was completely silenced by the ingenuous manner of the youth. Throwing off further reserve, he said, "Dat be all right. De letter find de Capteen at No. 56 German Street, Montreal."

The youth wrote down the address, and walked away.

At nine o'clock the next morning, the special agents stepped from the train in Montreal under the impression that Worms was in very truth a "Wandering Jew," a tempo-

rary sojourner in a strange land, who, like many others, had fled to the Canadian metropolis as a city of refuge. It was not till some time afterward, so cautiously were their operations conducted, that they learned he was a resident of the place, and a naturalized citizen of the Queen's dominions.

After breakfast, the officers called upon Hon. W. C. Dart, consul-general, to whom they communicated the object of their mission, and whose aid they solicited in securing the person of the swindler. While manifesting a desire to co-operate heartily in the proposed undertaking, that functionary explained the embarrassments attending the process of extradition. The situation was reported to the department at Washington, together with such facts as would enable the authorities to execute the necessary papers.

The officers had not been two hours in the city before Mr. Shallcross met Worms on the street, and so accurate was the description he had aided in preparing, that he instantly recognized the ill-starred visage.

Calling upon certain gentlemen to whom they brought letters of introduction, they proceeded to inquire into the pursuits, habits, and haunts of the forger, and were thus enabled to keep his movements under close surveillance, as day after day he drove about the city in a stylish sleigh, greatly enjoying to all appearance the bracing atmosphere, from the frostiness of which he was protected by elaborate and costly furs, purchased, no doubt, from the proceeds of the recent raid across the border. With little to do beyond keeping an eye on the criminal, time dragged wearily along, and as days grew into weeks, the special agents began to realize with no little inward disgust that from fear of exposure they themselves, the keen-scented hunters in the chase, were the virtual prisoners, at liberty only on their own recognizance to stroll about the hotel, or indulge cautiously in out-door exercise.

Daily communications to head-quarters kept the depart-

ment advised of the posture of affairs, but as a very small portion of the time sufficed for the preparation of the missives, the agents grew weary with waiting, and exhausted the resources of ingenuity in vain efforts to relieve the monotony. In answer to one of these epistles, setting forth in dolorous terms the discomforts of the situation, and asking for speedy release, the chief special agent admonished them to exercise patience, concluding with the scriptural injunction, "Watch and pray without ceasing." On receipt of this, inferring that some time must yet elapse before the requisite papers could be forwarded from Washington to Ottawa,—after which seven days are allowed under a provision of the treaty-act before the order for extradition can issue from the government,—and believing that their interests and comfort were as fully considered as the circumstances of the case would permit, they settled down into a state of resignation and tranquillity, prepared in mind to hold out to the end. The following letter from Mr. Tidball, written under the depressing influences referred to, though not particularly cheerful, shows how philosophers learn to make the best of things:—

"MONTREAL, January 19, 1876.

"DEAR SIR:—Nearly two weeks have elapsed since our arrival here, and I can scarcely recall a similar period throughout which the time has passed so unpleasantly.

"Aware that Mr. Shallcross has kept you advised of the state of affairs, I have postponed writing, in the hope that a speedy termination of our business would enable me to communicate the good tidings; but after all our waiting, we find the situation to be very uncertain, and the end beyond conjecture.

"Time passes wearily, in truth, I may say drearily; for while we go abroad as often as we deem prudent,—keeping in view the serpentine traces of our 'evil spirit,'—necessity compels us to consider ourselves in the light almost of prisoners, as under the circumstances, without authority to act, we feel that our *absence* would be less dangerous than our *presence*. Had we known, before leaving the United States, the wheel-within-a-wheel process to which the case would be subjected, we should have pursued an entirely dif-

ferent course; or if, immediately after our arrival, we could have anticipated what we have since learned, we should have returned and taken a new departure. However, 'what can't be cured must be endured.'

"The case is a peculiar and intricate one—in many respects new to us, and it is to be hoped that out of the delays, and annoyances, and necessities attending it some good may come. Surely there is great room for improvement; not so much, perhaps, in the efforts put forth to meet the demands of the case, as in the requirements of the treaty itself. That instrument is too ambiguous, and not sufficiently comprehensive to meet the exigencies that constantly arise to test its provisions, — like the present one, for instance.

"We continually and devoutly follow your injunction, 'Watch and pray without ceasing.' In fact, we 'die daily.' I do the watching, and Shallcross does the praying. I frequently hear him in pious yet forcible language calling upon the saints to 'bless' Worms and the fellow who has been so 'troubled' by him, and in various ways he deports himself as becomes a martyr to a good cause. His invocations are all made in secret, and, as he carefully avoids the 'market-place,' he cannot be accused of Phariseism.

"Neither of us have felt very well during the past few days, possibly the result of too constant watching and praying. I rather incline to the opinion, however, that our indisposition is superinduced by 'Worms,' and earnestly trust that the preparation daily expected from Washington will finally rid us of this disagreeable infliction. The 'squirm' was last evening seen driving through Great St. James Street at the rate of 2:40.

"Very respectfully,

"Z. L. TIDBALL, *Special Agent.*"

Meanwhile, notwithstanding their circumspection, the special agents attracted considerable attention from the numerous frequenters of St. Lawrence Hall, and small groups were often observed in quiet conversation, whose talk, as indicated by sly glances and gestures, bore upon the unknown "Yankees," and the probable business that had called them, in the dead of winter, across the border. The fact that they were Americans, — as citizens of the United States are designated

in Canada,—whose movements were somewhat constrained, and whose stay at the hotel had been unusually prolonged, was enough to excite a certain degree of suspicion.

It is a notorious fact that Canada offers an asylum for large numbers of malefactors from the States, who, knowing the nearness of the refuge, rush recklessly into deeds of violence and fraud that would not otherwise be undertaken. In the streets of Montreal, fugitives from justice boldly defy recognition, and, if one is occasionally arrested, he relies confidently upon the complications of the extradition treaty to furnish the means for escape. Consequently but one opinion prevails in regard to Americans whose sojourn lacks the freedom characterizing the manners of the tourist: they are looked upon either as escaped law-breakers, or detectives; and as belonging to one of the two classes the representatives of the post-office department were obviously regarded.

Mr. Shallcross, a man of mature years, strong physique, and massive brow, though quiet and unobtrusive in manners, could hardly fail anywhere to attract attention as a person of unusual penetration and force. His companion, many years younger, might have been taken as an *attaché* of the older gentleman. At any rate, both came to be viewed as mysterious strangers, and on several occasions were not a little annoyed by the inquisitiveness of certain impudent characters, whose looks suggested that they might belong to the class whereof Worms was a conspicuous ornament, and who perhaps, scenting danger to a confederate, were hovering about to spy out the land.

At this time it was conjectured by many that W. M. Tweed, the boss ring-master of New York, was harbored in Montreal. As the notion gained currency, the looks bestowed upon the inoffensive representatives of the government became more marked and perplexing. Ignorant of the cause, and fearful of premature exposure, Mr. Shallcross determined to find out the meaning of the prevalent curiosity. Approaching the proprietor of the hotel, he inquired, "Who are those fellows, and why are they continually watching me?"

"Why, don't you know?" replied the landlord; "they take you for 'Boss Tweed,' but think you have gone through enough trouble already to be entitled to what swag you have left."

"With a smile that was childlike and bland," the special agent replied, "All right; let them keep on thinking so," and turned away, considerably relieved at the indirect assurance that the secret of the mission was still preserved.

Owing to the delay of the victimized party in coming to Philadelphia, where the forged document was uttered, to initiate criminal proceedings, much valuable time was lost. At length, however, he reappeared at the scene of his late exploit, and furnished the testimony which formed the basis of the claim for extradition. On the 22d of January, special agent C. B. Barrett, accompanied by the crestfallen contractor for Indian supplies, arrived in Montreal, equipped with a copy of an indictment, and a warrant for the apprehension of Worms. When the papers were submitted to Hon. W. H. Kerr, Q. C., counsel for the prosecution, he decided that they did not meet the requirements of the case, as provided in section 3 of the extradition treaty between the governments of the United States and Great Britain. It was therefore determined that Mr. Tidball, who had become thoroughly acquainted with the law as well as the facts, should return to Washington with the view of supplying the deficiency.

In company with Mr. Barrett and the unfortunate landlord, he started on the afternoon of the 24th, and leaving his companions in Philadelphia, where certain additional papers were to be executed, proceeded on to the capital to procure the affidavits of Secretary Chandler, General B. H. Cowen, assistant secretary, and others. Thus equipped, he returned to Montreal, picking up the landlord on the road, and arriving on the 28th. The papers were pronounced correct by Mr. Kerr, who at once arranged to have the matter brought before the proper tribunal.

The afternoon of the same day, upon application in due

form, the court issued a warrant for the arrest of Charles Worms, which was placed in the hands of High Constable Bissonette for immediate service. Calling at the residence of the "doctor,"—the titular designation of the forger in the city,—and hearing that he had gone on "professional business" to Sorel, a village fifty miles below, the officer started



"The surprise of the gentleman thus rudely awakened grew into wonder, if not into dread."

in pursuit, driving all night through a pelting storm of snow and sleet, only to learn in the morning that the enterprising quack had crossed the river to Berthier, and had departed thence in the direction of Joliette, evidently intending to philanthropically embrace the towns on that route in the home-ward journey. As the team was too exhausted to press the chase, the high constable telegraphed to a deputy to intercept and arrest the accused. That official accordingly repaired to

Hocalaga, a small Indian village in the environs of the city, to await the arrival of the mail coach, wherein he found the doctor, snugly stowed away in a multitudinous array of luxurious wrappings. The surprise of the gentleman thus rudely awakened grew into wonder, if not into dread, on further learning that the deputy knew nothing of the nature of the charge. Although greatly startled, he preserved complete self-control, and with shrewdness, heightened by long experience in eluding punishment for evil-doing, he succeeded in keeping silent, a difficult feat under similar circumstances.

Worms was conveyed to the court-house, and the special agents immediately notified. In company with the hotel-keeper they repaired thither to confront the prisoner, who in the meantime had been informed of the nature of the accusation. On beholding the victim of his rascality, the *pseudo*-inspector exhibited palpable signs of uneasiness, but quickly recovering his wonted *nonchalance*, responded monosyllabically to various questions, manifesting no disposition to indulge in the pleasures of conversation. He recognized the landlord, however, calling him by name.

In reply to a proposition to accompany the officers back to the United States free of expense, the prisoner replied, "No, I no go back wid you. I am a citizen of dis countree. I be naturalized here in dis court-house more as one year ago, and nobody cannot take me out of dis countree. If I be dried, I must be dried here in dis city."

"But," responded Mr. Shallcross, "you have injured this young man, who feels badly and wants back the money out of which you swindled him."

"Dat be all right," replied the forger. "I knows all about dis business. When it come to showing papers, I can bring de docyments to prove dat oder persons have been as much to do wid dis business as I have."

Here, at the suggestion of his counsel, Worms declined to talk, relapsing into a state of stolid indifference. By order of the court, he was soon after remanded to jail for examination the following Monday.

On the 31st of January the hearing began, and continued till February 2d, when the judge decided to hold the prisoner for extradition. Thereupon the counsel for the defendant took an appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench, which, after careful consideration of the law and the testimony, approved the action of the lower court, and remanded the prisoner to await the necessary orders for his delivery to the United States authorities. Not yet ready to relinquish the fight, the prisoner, through his attorneys, applied for an order of appeal to the Supreme Court of the Dominion. The application was granted under section 49 of the act of the Canadian Parliament of April 8th, 1875.

Subsequently it was ascertained that this section had not been ratified by the home government of Great Britain, and hence was null and void. Mr. Kerr moved for a reconsideration of the order, and the minister of justice for the Dominion, upon hearing the argument, dismissed the appeal, and directed the prison authorities to deliver Worms to the government of the United States upon application in due form. When the information was communicated to Mr. Kerr through Consul-General Dart, he notified the post-office department at Washington by telegraph, requesting the immediate presence in Montreal of Mr. Shallcross, who had been authorized and empowered by the President of the United States to receive the forger, hold him in custody, conduct him into this country, and deliver him to the proper authorities of Pennsylvania. Accordingly, Mr. Shallcross, accompanied by Mr. Tidball, left Washington the evening of April 14th, and reached Montreal the morning of the 16th. As it was Sunday, the officers remained quietly at the hotel until evening, when they strolled about the town to inspect the localities which borrowed a transient interest from their connection with the swindler. His dwelling was a two-story granite front, in the old part of the town, and, like other houses of the class, entirely free from ornament; the double doors and windows, due to the severity of the climate, giving

the bleak, cheerless, barren buildings an oppressive, prison-like aspect.

Even more forbidding than the residence was the business "depot" of the "doctor." The gloomy, rakish-looking walls suggested that the inner dens might be the rendezvous where desperate characters congregated to plan nefarious expeditions against the peace and property of an unsuspecting public. Devoted ostensibly to the manufacture of the "Boone-



"Devoted ostensibly to the manufacture of 'Boonekamp Bitters,' the premises were really used for making articles that belong to the equipment of the vilest order of quacks."

kamp Bitters," the premises were really used for making articles that belong to the equipment of the vilest order of quacks, and that in the States come under the ban of the law.

Monday morning the officers paid their respects to Mr. Kerr, who had completed the preliminary arrangements for

the transfer of the prisoner. At one o'clock p. m., Mr. Shallcross, with High Constable Bissonette, repaired to the jail. The astonishment of the swindler was equalled only by his wrath. Said he, "I don't for see by what audoritee you take me. I pay one hundred dollar for appeal to buy de seals and de papers. What become of my monish? For what be my hundred dollar gone? For shame! for shame! tam shame!"

At half past two the parties were all at the Grand Trunk Depot, prepared to return to the States. So quietly was the business conducted that not even the most intimate associates of Worms were apprised of the event until some time after his removal from the jail.

On the 18th the special agents arrived in Philadelphia, and brought the prisoner before a United States commissioner, who committed him to jail, in default of bail for five thousand dollars, on the charge of violating the postal laws. The next morning he was brought into the state court, then in session, and remanded to await trial for forgery, on the indictment already found by the grand jury.

While prosecuting the investigation, the officers learned that within a comparatively short period, by the same trick, varied only in minor details, Worms had succeeded in victimizing parties living in New York, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Michigan, out of sums ranging from five to ten thousand dollars. In the case of the Michigan man, the substituted letter, containing sheets of blank paper, was registered to Secretary Delano instead of to the President. They also learned that at the time of the arrest preparations were in progress for another swoop in the month of March, in which the great "Inspector for the purchase of Indian supplies" confidently expected to gather in twelve thousand more.

Worms exhibited a large stock of recommendations from generals, colonels, and other prominent personages. Some were dated during the time of the war, and were evidently inspired by genuine regard for the man. Without doubt he

made a popular quartermaster. Others were of more recent origin, and were obviously drawn out by personal solicitation, as they opened for the most part with some such formula as this: "My dear Captain : Your esteemed favor of — date received, and it gives me great pleasure to bear testimony, &c." These letters were used with great effect in blinding the eyes of victims, as it could not be supposed that the comrade and familiar friend of eminent soldiers would stoop to the perpetration of a low swindle.

It is a safe rule to beware of the man who parades voluminous recommendations. The worthy do not need them, and the self-regarding do not show them except in emergencies of such gravity as to demand the sacrifice.

The country is infested with thousands of rogues who subsist by swindling the unwary. Hardly a week passes that the special agents of the department do not arrest one or more for using the mails in furtherance of some iniquitous scheme. Probably many escape unharmed with the plunder snatched from the credulous, the dupes pocketing their losses in silence rather than brave the torture of confession and exposure.

The grand jury having found a true bill against Worms, his trial began June 7th, 1876, before the United States Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Hon. John Cadwallader presiding.

The evidence against the accused was overwhelming, the witnesses for the prosecution corroborating each other in every essential particular, and impressing upon the minds of the jury the positive guilt of the prisoner. The defense offered no testimony to refute the charge, simply producing sundry "certificates of good character," whereby they evidently hoped to raise a presumption that "Doctor," *alias* "Captain" Worms was a man of too high standing to descend to forgery and swindling.

A strenuous effort was made by the counsel for the prisoner to prove that the indictment was defective in charging the

accused with the commission of a forgery for the purpose of defrauding the United States, whereas the evidence all went to show, assuming the reality of the crime, that it was perpetrated to defraud an individual and not the public.

The arguments of counsel closed at nine in the evening, when the court adjourned till the following day. On reassembling, his honor, Judge Cadwallader, addressed the jury in a charge of great length, in which he critically reviewed the evidence, and interpreted the application of the law. He admitted the importance of the legal point raised by the defense, instructing the jury that the questions for them to determine were, first, whether the evidence satisfied them that a forgery had been perpetrated; and if so, second, to determine the nature and purport of the forged instrument, and the representations made in connection with it. He further charged that if the evidence satisfied them that the prisoner had forged what he represented to be a *bona fide* contract with the interior department, by means of which he had perpetrated a fraud upon any person, it would be their duty to return a verdict of guilty; as the law clearly determines that a man who commits an unlawful act for the purpose of injuring another cannot be permitted to define the extent of his responsibility therefor. No one is allowed to take advantage of his own wrong. It is contrary to law and sound policy that offenders should be suffered to limit the scope and interpret the measure of their responsibility for criminal actions.

At the close of the charge from the judge the jury retired to deliberate, and returned in twenty minutes with a verdict of "Guilty."

The counsel for the prisoner thereupon moved for a suspension of sentence, on the plea that they desired to make application in due form for a new trial. The court granted the delay.

For several weeks the case remained in abeyance. At length, on the 1st of August, Judge Cadwallader refused the motion for a new trial, and sentenced Worms to pay a fine of one thousand dollars, and to an imprisonment of four years.

SWINDLERS AND THEIR TRICKS.



SOLD.

THE ingenuity and perseverance of the fraternity of swindlers is only equaled by the gullibility and patience of their dupes. During the flush times that followed the war, immense fortunes were suddenly acquired by a class of cheats who operated on the credulity of the public through gift enterprises, lotteries, and other kindred schemes. Most of the large concerns established their headquarters in New York city, flooding the entire country, particularly the South and West, with lithographic circulars, written apparently with the pen for the

exclusive benefit of the recipient, and showing how fortunes could be securely made by remitting specified sums to the houses in question. Some of the bogus firms simply pocketed the cash of correspondents without pretending to render any equivalent whatever; while others, no more honest, but

a little more politic, sent forth worthless jewelry and other stuff by the bushel.

One of the most villainous and at the same time successful devices was built up on the offer of counterfeit currency at a heavy discount. In substance, the circulars, emanating from different parties, and from the same parties under different names, were all alike. They usually began with an insidious compliment to the person addressed, to the effect that from trustworthy sources the writer had heard of him as a man of more than ordinary capacity and shrewdness, and, emboldened by the high estimate placed upon his abilities by persons well qualified to judge, had selected him as the very individual to aid in securing a fortune for both with "absolute safety." The circular usually goes on to state that the writer is a first-class engraver, — indeed "one of the most expert in the United States," — while his partner is a first-class printer. Hence the firm possess unrivaled facilities for imitating the national currency. The recipient is particularly cautioned to beware of a class of miscreants who infest the city of New York and advertise throughout the country the goods that he manufactures, but send nothing except rubbish. The "original Doctor Jacobs" excoriates unmercifully the whole tribe of swindlers whose rascalities debauch and bring odium upon the trade. He exhorts the gentleman of great reputed "shrewdness and sagacity" to observe the utmost caution in conducting operations, and gives him explicit directions how to forward the purchase-money.

Not a few, on receipt of the circular in an unfamiliar hand, feel highly flattered at the complimentary allusions to their personal qualifications, and wonder how Wiggins & Co., five hundred or a thousand miles away, ever heard of them. They read and re-read the missive, dwelling with particular satisfaction on the references to their shrewdness and ability. It is true perhaps that they are troubled by a vague notion that their neighbors have never discovered these extraordinary gifts; but Wiggins & Co. have, and that is enough.

If Mr. Verdant knew how the "expert engraver" happened to send him the letter, he would contemplate the fact with much less complacency. Swindlers employ agents directly or indirectly in all parts of the country to furnish the names of parties who are supposed to be weak, foolish, and particularly accessible to temptation. Cunning rascals make it a business in connection with other nefarious operations to procure long lists of such persons, which are sold at high prices to concerns engaged in perpetrating popular swindles. The managers studiously avoid directing circulars to people reputed to be either honest, or sufficiently versed in the wiles of the world to take care of themselves. Shallow-pated knaves enjoy a complete monopoly of their favors.

Despite repeated exposures of the frauds, a great many innocent flies accept the invitation of the spiders to walk into the parlor. When the purchase-money is sent in advance, Mr. Verdant never hears from his appreciative friends, Wiggins & Co., afterwards. When "the goods" are forwarded by express C. O. D., Mr. Verdant sidles nervously into the office of delivery, and, having paid the expenses, ranging from ten dollars upwards into the hundreds, quickly thrusts the package out of sight, and hurries home to seek for the hidden treasure in the most secluded spot about the premises. For the world the poor fellow would not permit his wife to learn that her husband is a rascal, dabbling in the "queer." For a moment he lingers on the borders of El Dorado, not wishing to terminate too abruptly the pleasures of anticipation, even for the more solid enjoyment of actual possession. After a brief, fond, and yet tremulous survey of the exterior of the box, he proceeds to pry off the cover. A neat fold of brown paper appears. After carefully removing various wrappings, he finds at the core a piece of wood, a handful of saw-dust, or some other equally valuable prize. The countenance, lately radiant with the smiles of hope, suffers an unexpected eclipse. The man of renowned "shrewdness" and "discretion," who a moment before held in his fingers the key of

fortune, in contemplating the wreck of so many sweet illusions, arrives slowly at the conviction that he has been egregiously duped and swindled. But what recourse has the victim of disappointed cupidity? A broad gulf like that which separated Dives from Lazarus lies between him and his hard-earned money. If he complains to the authorities with the view of intercepting the profits flowing from his over-trustful hand toward the pockets of the "expert engraver," every one in the community will soon be laughing at him as a silly knave, who, in trying to cheat others, was ignominiously trapped by a supposed confederate on the threshold of the enterprise. Exposure and ridicule would be far worse than the loss of the greenbacks. In other troubles he finds consolation in communing with the wife of his bosom, but now even this solace is denied him. If the experience nips the swelling bud of dishonesty, the investment will not prove wholly unprofitable.

Not infrequently the gull writes again to the "expert engraver," complaining of the hard treatment, and demanding an explanation. With Wiggins & Co. reasons are plenty as blackberries. The head of that high-toned establishment replies that there has been some trouble with the police; and that the first package was sent as a blind to deceive the detectives. On receipt of ten, twenty, or thirty dollars more, not only the "perfect imitations" already in arrears, but a large amount in addition will be forwarded promptly to the previous address. Strange as it may appear, a great many, with the memory of the last fraud still rankling freshly, send a second order, to be imposed upon again in precisely the same way.

As the brood of swindlers make extensive use of the mails for the dissemination of lying circulars, the post-office department has long waged relentless war upon them, employing all legal weapons within its reach. At different times laws and regulations have been framed for the double purpose of punishing the cheats and destroying their iniquitous trade. Hundreds of successful arrests have been made by special

agents, and hundreds of concerns broken up, still the struggle for existence is maintained with an energy and wealth of resource that, rightly directed, could hardly fail to bring abundant and honorable returns. As long as the harvest of fools ripens in perennial luxuriance, it is a difficult task to drive away the reapers. With resolution untamed by fines and imprisonment, and ingenuity that enables the science of attack to keep nearly abreast of the science of defense, they scale the walls and burst through the weak spots in the inclosures. Great profits, won at no risk of capital, tempt professional operators to live in ignominy and brave constant peril, rather than abandon their vile pursuits. Still along the entire length of the line, with truly parental solicitude, the government strives to protect the ignorant, the weak, and the unwary from the wolves who stand ready to devour them.

Another consideration fully justifies the department in its vigorous and far-reaching efforts to exterminate the traffic of the swindlers. The knowledge that numerous valuable letters are passing through the mails addressed to such concerns is a constant temptation to a certain class of its employés to violate the trusts committed to them, and enter upon a course of dishonesty. The post-office clerk, or route agent, reasons with a plausibility which satisfies the feeble demands of an easy conscience, that if the letter is permitted to pass on to its destination, the inclosure will fall into the hands of a professional cheat, and consequently he might as well appropriate the contents himself. At all events, the remitter will get no return for the venture, and the only other party to suffer is a miserable outcast entitled to no consideration. Overcome by the fallacious but seductive argument, he falls and becomes a thief. In a short time he is stealing other letters, and traveling with swift steps the broad road to ruin. Arrest, trial, and imprisonment are likely to follow in rapid succession. Many employés, whose careers have ended in early shame, might have preserved their integrity had it not been for this particular kind of temptation. None of us are wholly good or wholly bad,

and a majority perhaps pass through some period in life where influences less potent than the one under discussion determine whether the spirit of good or evil is to predominate in the development of character. In some cases the weight of a feather may turn the scale. The peril is particularly great in early youth before habits have hardened into principles. Now it is from the young of the nation that the ranks of the postal service are almost exclusively recruited. For the sake of its employés, and for the protection of the great interests committed to them, the department strives with tireless energy to crush out of existence the swindling schemes which thus indirectly, by throwing constant temptation in their way, lure many to ruin.

Outsiders, who open negotiations with rascals like the "expert engraver," are usually very careful to keep out of sight in the operation, and avoid all publicity. Hence, on discovering the fraud practiced upon them, they make no complaint, even permitting the most barefaced cheats to walk off unmolested with their booty. Sometimes, however, the dupes do not escape so easily, but lose reputation as well as money. Often, too, the lightning strikes in very unexpected places. Illustrations might be multiplied indefinitely.

AN ERRING SHEPHERD.

Several years ago, a preacher of the gospel, stationed not far from the northern frontier of the republic, received by mail one of the seductive missives of Ragem & Co., of New York city. The *douceur* opened with the usual complimentary references to the peculiar personal fitness of the clergyman for the proposed enterprise, and went on to state that, in exchange for genuine greenbacks, Ragem & Co. would furnish in the proportion of fifty to one imitations so absolutely perfect that the most experienced bank officers could not distinguish the difference. Rev. Zachariah Sapp,—for such was the euphonious name of the preacher,—after an attentive perusal of the flattering proposal, deposited the document in his coat-pocket for con-

venience of reference. Having pondered the subject for a day or two, he decided to write to Ragem & Co. for more explicit information.

Divining with the peculiar instinct of the guild the character of the fish now nibbling at the naked hook, the cheat resolved to risk a little bait, and accordingly sent by return mail a genuine one-dollar note, with a written invitation both for a reply and a personal conference.

Never before did the Rev. Zachariah Sapp subject a piece of paper to such scrutiny. Both with the naked eye and with a microscope,—a relic of collegiate days,—he studied the engravings and filigree work. Detail by detail he compared the supposed imitation with bills of known genuineness without being able to discover the slightest point of variation between them. Paper, printing, and engraving seemed to be absolutely perfect. While the study was progressing, the imagination of the clergyman soared through the empyrean of dazzling expectations. Why continue to toil hard for a small pittance when the golden apples were hanging within easy reach? Why drag out an existence in penury when wealth and its joys were thrust upon him?

Zachariah, however, was prudent and thrifty — indeed rather more thrifty in the estimation of parishioners than



Rev. Zachariah Sapp.

beftitted one who held by right of faith a title-deed to mansions in the skies. Almost as soon would he risk his future inheritance as peril on a doubtful venture the few hundred dollars snugly saved up for a wet day by prudence and economy.

Not willing to rely entirely on his own judgment, he rather reluctantly decided to call on a banker in an adjacent town, with whom he enjoyed a slight acquaintance. In thinking the matter over he was greatly perplexed to determine how to introduce the subject. Of course it would not answer to allow the cashier to fathom his secret purpose, and yet he was oppressed with a vague consciousness that only a translucent film hid his thought from the world. Once or twice, in driving over on the unfamiliar errand, weak and irresolute he half resolved to turn back, but greed finally prevailed, and he kept on to the village.

With a strong but unsatisfactory effort to appear at ease, he sauntered into the bank. After the usual interchange of greetings, he nervously remarked, "Brother Hyde, as I was coming this way to-day to call on brother Tompkins, I have taken the liberty to drop in to ask you a question on a matter in your line."

"Very well," replied the banker, "I shall be happy to serve you."

"I had a transaction a few days ago," resumed the clergyman, "with a peddler,—an entire stranger to me,—who in making change gave me a number of bills which I have reason to suspect are counterfeits. I desire your opinion."

"Please let me see them," said Mr. Hyde.

He took the one-dollar note from the hand of the unfaithful pastor, and after scanning it a moment, inquired, "What is the matter with it?"

"Is it good?" queried the anxious owner.

"I wish I had my safe full of the same sort," answered the banker. "There is nothing bad about the bill. What makes you think so? Perhaps you have shown me the wrong one. Let me see the others."

"I must have left the rest at home," replied the preacher, fumbling among the compartments of the pocket-book.

Having accomplished the object of his mission without perpetrating, as he thought, any disastrous blunder, Mr. Sapp brought the interview to a close with a few commonplace remarks, and hurried away to enjoy in solitary self-communion the thick-crowding visions of future affluence.



"'Is it good?' queried the anxious owner."

With the last doubt satisfactorily overcome, the plans of the prospective millionaire rapidly took shape. He could raise five hundred dollars, which at the proposed rate of interchange would purchase twenty-five thousand of the "absolutely perfect imitations." The sum seemed vast—incalculable. His imagination, hitherto bound down by the narrow circumstances of remote rural life, staggered while trying to grasp the conception of so much wealth. Like the mysteries of

time and space, it appeared too grand for comprehension. Then his reveries strayed into another channel. What noble fellows were Ragem & Co.! Why, among forty millions of people, did they pick out him, an unknown clergyman, living in an obscure place hundreds of miles from the metropolis, to be the favored recipient of untold wealth? Surely, this is a special Providence. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge. He watches over his own. Suddenly the erring clergyman feels a terrible pull at his heart-strings. What right has he, about to betray a sacred trust, and engage in operations branded as infamous by the laws of the land, to claim the watchful care of Providence? Will not the all-seeing eye follow him? Will not the omnipotent hand strike him heavily in wrath? The poor man wipes the cold perspiration from his forehead, and wonders if it will pay.

But he has paltered too long, and now the devil claims him for his own.

Returning home, Sapp wrote to Ragem & Co., stating the amount of his available resources, and saying that upon a given day and hour he would meet them at the appointed rendezvous. On the following Sunday, the congregation were startled at the close of the afternoon services by an extraordinary announcement from the pulpit.

Before pronouncing the benediction, the pastor said, "I take this opportunity to communicate to you collectively a piece of personal intelligence which I have hitherto kept secret. Under the will of a relative who recently died in the state of Michigan, I inherit a large sum—to me, with my humble wants, a very large sum. By appointment, I am to meet the executor of the estate this week in New York city to receive the first installment of the legacy. I do not propose to leave you, my dear parishioners, but to remain among you and toil with you as I have done for so many years. A goodly portion at least of my inheritance I intend to invest in this community, that neighbors and friends may share jointly in my prosperity. I trust I may be guided to make a

wise use of the talents thus unexpectedly, and I may say providentially, committed to my keeping. We know from the teachings of Scripture that wealth brings great responsibilities, and that we shall be held to a strict account for the manner in which we employ it. May your prayers go with me."

The congregation crowded around the pastor with congratulations. Particularly demonstrative were the ebullitions of two or three brothers who saw a chance of exchanging sundry unsalable possessions for slices in the inheritance.

Mr. Sapp reached New York city in the evening, and the momentous interview was to take place at an early hour the next day. Sleep came in brief and fitful snatches. But the stars roll on in their majestic spheres, regardless of mortal hopes and fears. At length day broke, when the preacher rose from bed anxious and unrefreshed. A little before the appointed time he proceeded to a certain building, and having mounted two flights of stairs, saw the magic number on the door in front of him. As the clock struck he entered. Agreeably to a preconcerted plan, he wiped the right corner of his mouth with a white handkerchief, and nodded three times. The only person in the room, a well-dressed and apparently affable gentleman, responded by wiping the left corner of his mouth with a red silk handkerchief, and nodding three times. The signal is correctly answered: it is he! So far all works beautifully, with every promise kept. The bill was a perfect imitation; the engraver is on hand to a second.

“Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme.”

The fellow passing under the name of Ragem & Co. welcomed the new arrival cordially. “Ah,” said he, “your promptness and circumspection show that I am not disappointed in my man. I see that you come up to the full measure of my expectations. Do you know I am a remarkable

judge of character? In fact, I seldom or never make a mistake. We are both in luck."

"I was trained to punctuality from early youth," replied the preacher; and proceeding directly to business, without further circumlocution, continued, "I succeeded in raising five hundred dollars, which entitles me under the agreement to twenty-five thousand."

From an inner pocket, after removing a number of pins, he produced six one hundred dollar notes, saying, by way of explanation, "For greater security I converted my funds into bills of large denomination. One I reserve for contingencies; the other five are for you."

"Your money is here in the safe," said Ragem, taking the five notes, and turning toward the safe as if to unlock it. But the scoundrel evidently reasoned that it would be silly to remain content with the five when he could just as easily capture the sixth.

Walking back, he remarked, "I want to show you that my large bills are just as perfect as the small ones;" and, as if for purposes of comparison, he took the remaining note from the hand of the clergyman.

At this moment began a fearful knocking on a side door, that threatened the speedy demolition of the frail barrier. "Run, run," whispered Ragem, as if in the extremity of terror, "the police are on us."

The preacher needed no second invitation, fear of exposure giving wings to his feet. Almost at a bound he cleared the two flights of stairs and emerged into the street, walking several blocks, and turning a number of corners before he dared to look back.

The *bona fide* occupant of the room where these parties met, had no share whatever in the nefarious transactions carried on there. Through the treachery of the janitor, Ragem was permitted at certain hours to make use of the apartment for the purpose of keeping appointments with his victims. A confederate stationed on the outside delivered the knocks as

soon as customers were plucked, and it became desirable to get rid of their company. Occasional hints of improper practices reached the ear of the real lessee, but these had never yet taken such shape as to give a decisive clue to the trouble, dupes for the most part pocketing their losses in silence.



"I have heard of you before. You are the villain, are you, who has been turning my office into a den of thieves? I have caught you, at last!"

After an interval of two or three hours, Mr. Sapp plucked up courage to return. Having mounted the stairs, he entered the room warily. His late partner was not there. A stalwart gentleman, who seemed to be the proprietor, looked up inquiringly, and was not a little puzzled when the visitor supplemented the performance of wiping the right corner of his mouth by three deliberate nods. "What can I do for you to-day?" inquired the gentleman, rising.

"You are, I presume, a partner of Mr. Ragem," answered Sapp. "I see he is out. Our business this morning was unfortunately interrupted by the police, and I have returned to complete it."

"What business?" asked the proprietor, in undisguised astonishment.

Now the preacher made the very natural mistake of supposing that the surprise manifested by his interlocutor was a mere matter of policy and caution. Hence he proceeded to explain: "Ragem must have told you. I am the gentleman who gave him the five hundred dollars, and he said that my twenty-five thousand were locked up in the safe."

The proprietor did not wait to hear more, but seizing the affrighted creature by the collar, thundered forth, "I have heard of you before. You are the villain, are you, who has been turning my office into a den of thieves? I have caught you at last!"

Awaking to a partial comprehension of the situation, the poor wretch stammered forth, "There must be some mistake. My name is a'—is a'—is a' Smith—Smith—John Smith."

"John Smith, is it?" growled the proprietor. "Well, all I have to say is, John Smith, if not the biggest is the most numerous rascal in the city. John, come along to the police station."

And John went, billows of trouble rolling over him as the waters of the Red Sea closed over Pharaoh. Vain the effort to recall consolatory texts pertinent to the occasion! He was sorely chastened indeed, but the stripes were inflicted not in love but in wrath. He mourned, yet whence could he look for comfort?

To avoid a worse fate, the prisoner revealed his identity, exhibited the correspondence from "Ragem & Co.," and made a full statement of the facts. The painful news reached the church shortly after the return of the pastor, when his pulpit career came to an ignominious end. He soon removed to the

far west, hoping to bury his disgrace in the shades of the primeval forest.

The fall of Rev. Zachariah Sapp sounds a note of warning not without its lessons. The only safety in dealing with temptation is to repel its insidious approaches from the outset. Whoever listens in patience to the siren whisper is half lost already. Human experience abundantly confirms the divine wisdom of the command, "Get thee behind me, Satan," as the one sole safe way of meeting evil advances. At the close of well-spent, useful lives, myriads can thank a kind Providence, not that they have been stronger than others who have turned out differently, but that they have been tried less. Walking among unseen perils, none can without danger of ruin, discard even for a moment the armor of honesty and truth.

"Oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
In deepest consequence."

For the most part, only the ignorant and inexperienced fall into the trap which caught the Rev. Zachariah Sapp. Occasionally, however, men of some local reputation for sharpness enter into negotiations with the swindlers and become pretty deeply involved before they discover their bearings.

AN ASPIRANT FOR CONGRESS.

A few years ago, the "Hon." John Whimpery Brass, of Georgia, one of the "thoughtful patriots" of the period, who now and then found time to lay aside the cares of state-craft to nurse little private jobs of his own, allured by the seductive offers of "Wogan & Co.," of New York city, wrote to that somewhat mythical concern proposing to become their agent for the circulation of the "queer." Even after receiving the first installment of their wares, the honorable gentleman did not comprehend that the firm dealt exclusively in saw-dust,

not in currency. He wrote again, complaining that, after a journey of sixty miles over a rough road to the nearest reliable express office, he found nothing but a worthless package, marked "C. O. D.," awaiting him. Did Wogan & Co. distrust either his parts or fidelity? He ventured to assert that no man in the state could serve them so effectually. He had just run for Congress, and though beaten at the polls by "fraud," intended to contest the seat with

the chances of success in his favor. The mountaineers among whom he lived did not care whether the money in their pockets was good or bad so long as it circulated. He could put thousands of counterfeits afloat without the slightest fear of detection. His constituency believed in him and would stand by him. Currency was very scarce in that congressional district,



The Aspirant.

and it would really be doing his people a great favor to give them more. After setting forth the mutual benefits to accrue from trusting him, he appealed to Wogan & Co. with the vehemence and energy of the sewing-machine man, or life-insurance agent, to send on the goods without further delay. They should never regret dealing with him, his character and standing being a sufficient guaranty that he could not play false. He was acting in good faith, and expected like treatment in return.

Unfortunately for the political aspirations of "Hon." John Whimpery Brass, the authorities not long after made a descent upon the den of Wogan & Co., finding a great many letters from credulous fools, and a large supply of saw-dust — their only stock in trade. The missives of the prospective congressman were published, thus gaining much more extensive currency than he proposed to give to the imitation greenbacks. It was supposed that the noisy fellow would slink away to some cave in his native mountains, and never show his brazen face among honest people again. But the impudence of "Hon." John Whimpery Brass rose to the level of the emergency. Instead of hiding or hanging himself, he published a card representing that he embarked in the scheme for the purpose of entrapping Wogan & Co. and bringing them to justice.

Pathetic was the spectacle, showing the confidence of an ingenuous soul in its own prowess, of the volunteer detective, digging parallels on the southern spurs of the Blue Ridge for the capture of the wily swindler a thousand miles away! Armed with a kernel of corn, the doughty gosling sets forth to catch the wicked fox that is preying on the flock! If the bold mountaineers, the constituency of "Hon." John Whimpery Brass, cannot commend the discretion displayed by the projector of the enterprise, they must certainly admire his pluck. In face of the odds, few goslings would volunteer.

Perhaps the card might have been accepted by the more trustful class of adherents as a satisfactory explanation of the letters, had not the aspiring statesman in course of time fallen under the ban of the law for defrauding widows of their pensions, the campaign against Wogan & Co. having so completely exhausted the virtue of the amateur who planned it, as to leave no residue to fructify in subsequent operations.

THE FORTUNE OF SETH SAVAGE.

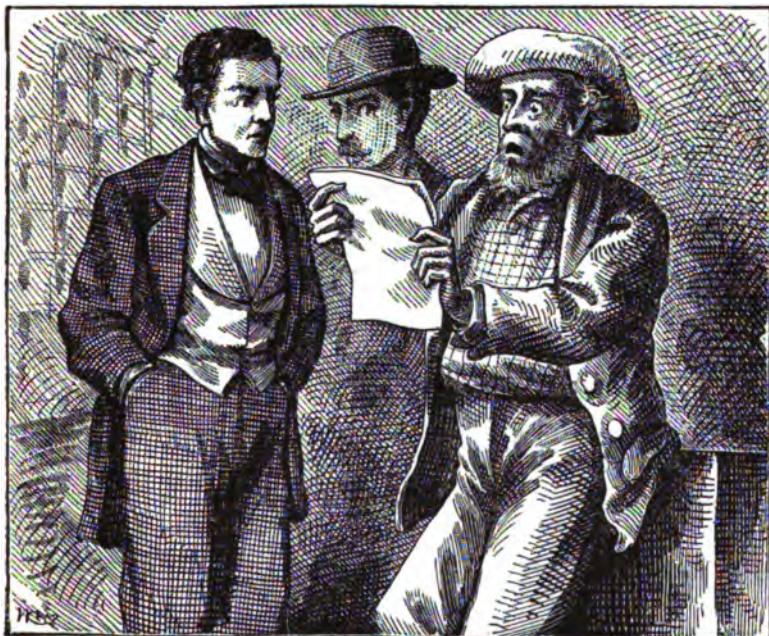
At one time the bogus-lottery men drove a thrifty business, but the efforts, virtually co-operative, of the post-office department and of the legislatures of the older states, have latterly pretty effectually forced them into the wilderness. The managers forage on the same class of people as the saw-dust swindlers, procuring lists of names in the same way. A common method of procedure is to inclose with advertisements announcing the prizes, together with the place and date of drawing, one or more tickets duly numbered. Great confidence is expressed in the personal fitness of the party addressed, who is requested to act as agent for the sale of the tickets. A few weeks later another letter is sent to the intended victim, informing him that the ticket of a given number forwarded to him at such a date had drawn a prize, the value of which is variously stated from a few hundred to many thousand dollars. He is then requested to send immediately ten dollars — more or less — for the ticket, perhaps ten or twenty more for additional charges, when the full face value of the prize will be forwarded promptly by express, check on New York, or in any other way the recipient may direct. He is also told to ante-date the letter, the intermediary promising to blur the postmark to correspond, so that the remittance may appear to have been made prior to the drawing. In conclusion the writer adroitly suggests that he desires the fortunate man to exhibit the money to his neighbors, stating how he obtained it, and mentioning particularly the address of the agent from whom the ticket was purchased, the object being to create an excitement in the place with a view to large sales for the next drawing.

Even of a trick as transparent as this the victims are counted by thousands, exposures and warnings being alike disregarded. The infatuation of a certain class of ignorant and credulous people is well illustrated by the case of Seth Savage, a poor man possessed of a few acres in the vicinity

of a small village in Vermont. One day, when a special agent of wide experience happened to be visiting the post-office, Seth received a letter, the perusal of which threw him into a frenzy of excitement.

"What is the matter?" inquired the postmaster. "You seem to have good news."

"Look a-here," replied Seth, holding forth the missive in



"Look a-here, replied Seth, holding forth the missive in his shriveled and bony fingers."

his shriveled and bony fingers, "for nigh on to sixty-five year, Mr. Martin, I've fit and work'd and work'd and fit jest for my vittles and drink. Neow when I'm tew old tew 'joy it, a fortin comes to me."

"Is that so?" answered Mr. Martin. "I am very glad; but tell me, what is it? Your neighbors will all be glad to hear of your good luck."

"Read that," said Seth, handing him the letter triumphantly.

The postmaster read the manuscript. One Dewitt of New York city assured Mr. Savage that a certain ticket sent to him a month before had drawn a prize of three thousand dollars; that on receipt of thirty-five dollars in a letter ante-dated according to directions, the full amount would be forwarded to him.

"Surely, Seth," expostulated the postmaster, "you are not going to be fooled in this way. Dewitt is a humbug, a swindler."

"Neow, heow dew yeou know that?" inquired Seth. "Has he ever fool'd yeou?"

"I don't deal with that sort of people," replied Mr. Martin, mildly. "I dislike to see any one wronged, especially a neighbor. Here is a gentleman who knows all about such matters." And Seth was formally introduced to the special agent, who took pains to explain the character of the swindle fully.

The officer left the village with the pleasant assurance that his brief visit had contributed at least toward the rescue of one poor object from the jaws of the devourer.

After all, however, Seth was not convinced. By selling his only cow he managed to swell his scanty stock of cash to the requisite sum, which he sent to Dewitt, fully expecting to be able in a few days to confound the postmaster by the actual display of his newly gotten wealth. The dupe, who had invested a goodly portion of his scanty means in the venture, waited long if not patiently. At length, after the expiration of the last hope, Mr. Martin inquired, "How did it happen, Seth, that you threw away your money on that lottery scamp, when we showed you that the whole thing was a cheat?"

"Wall, neow, arter it's all lost," replied Seth, "I'll tell yeou jest heow 'twas. Human natur' is natrally suspectin'. I tho't yeou and that ar' t'other post-offis fellah want'd to git the prize for yeourselfs; an' I didn't mean to be beat so."

A WISH UNEXPECTEDLY GRATIFIED.

When the bogus-lottery men were driven out of the large cities by the vigor of the postal authorities, they tried for a while to operate from small country towns by collusion with dishonest postmasters. As the delinquencies of the offenders were successively brought to light, their heads rolled into the basket at the foot of the official guillotine. The swindlers, however, succeeded in bribing fresh victims, and for a time cunning and duplicity managed with tolerable success to maintain a foothold against the power of the department.

Among other similar swindles, sealed circulars were at one time scattered broadcast over the more remote states, announcing that on a given date the drawing for a series of magnificent prizes would take place at Livingston Hall, No. 42 Elm Avenue, Wington Junction, Connecticut. Patrons were urged to remit the purchase-money for tickets promptly, as there would be no postponement of the grand event under any circumstances. "Fortune," continued the glittering advertisement, "knocks once at every one's door, and she is now knocking at yours."

As usual, multitudes swallowed the bait, but some, instead of sending the greenbacks to Highsalutin & Co., forwarded the circulars to the department. Thereupon special agent Sharretts was instructed to visit Wington Junction, with the view of learning whether the postmaster was properly discharging his duties. Taking an early opportunity to perform the mission, he alighted at the station one morning, and proceeded to survey the town, which consisted of four or five houses scattered along the highway for a distance of half a mile. "Livingston Hall" and "Elm Avenue" were nowhere visible. It was apparent that "No. 42" on any avenue was a remote contingency not likely to arise in the present generation.

Having previously ascertained that the postmaster was also switch-tender at the junction, and that the cares of the

office devolved on his wife, the officer walked up to a keen-looking man in front of the little round switch-house, whose energies were devoted exclusively at that moment to the mastication of a huge quid of tobacco, and who, after a prolonged scrutiny of the stranger, answered his salutation in an attenuated drawl, "Meornin', sir."

"Will you be kind enough to tell me, sir, where Mr. Morris, the postmaster, can be found?" asked the agent.

"Wall, I guess my name's Morris. What kin I do fur yeou?"

"Mr. Morris, I should like a few minutes' private conversation on business of great importance, which can be so managed as to turn out advantageously to us both. I do not wish to be overheard or interrupted. In these times even blank walls have ears, you know."

The last suggestion seemed to serve as a passport to the confidence of the postmaster. Leading the way into the switch-house, he remarked, "Come in heear. Neow, what is it?"

"The fact is, Mr. Morris, some friends of mine propose to go into a little speculation, which will involve a large correspondence; and for reasons that I need not specify to a man like you, they do not wish to have every rag-tag, bobtail post-office clerk poring over their letters, and asking impertinent questions at the delivery-window. If they can find a shrewd, square man, who knows how to keep his mouth shut, and who can't be fooled, that for a handsome consideration will put the letters away in a safe place till called for, they are willing to make an arrangement that will be profitable all around. You have been recommended as just the person. I am told that you generally know which side your bread is buttered, and have called to see if we can't arrange to pull together."

"'Nuff said," ejaculated Morris, with a sly wink. "I know what yeou want, but my wife is the one to fix things. I don't have nuthin' to dew with the letters. Sue 'tends to everything."

The folks as we'se a-workin' for said we must be plaguey keerful about the deetectors. I'll bet nun on 'em can't play it on my wife tho'. If they dew, they'll have to git up arly in the mornin'."

With that he thrust his head out of the window, and yelled, "Sue! Sue!"

As the sound died away, a tall, raw-boned female, from whose cheeks the bloom of youth had faded a number of years before, emerged from the side door of a two-story cottage, about eighty rods distant, and walked briskly to the switch-house, where she was introduced to the stranger as "my wife."

After a little preliminary skirmishing, she invited the agent to go over to the cottage. Having been duly ushered into the "best room," he embellished for her benefit the story already told to the husband.

"I think I kin 'commode yeou," she broke forth, "but yeou'll have to pay putty well for't. Laws me, I'm told — and I've ways o' heerin' 'bout these things — that the deetectors are jest as likely as not to come a-swoopin' deown enny minnit. Yeou know, if they feound it out, we'd be smash'd."

Her terms were ten dollars a week. Highfalutin & Co. paid six, but she understood the business a great deal better now than when she made the bargain with them. The agent thought the price rather high, but finally consented to contract at that figure.

Then, as if troubled by an after-thought, he said, "Madam, how do I know but some of these 'deetectors' may come around, and, seeing my letters, get me into difficulty?"

"Why, laws a' mercy," said she, "don't be skeer'd. Yeou jest leave that to me. The minnit them air letters gits here, I hides 'em in that bewro-draw'r," pointing to an article of furniture in the corner.

"Is it a safe place?" queried the agent.

"Yas, it is," answered the woman. "Got it half full neow. Carry the key in my pocket."

She gave a grin, intended for a knowing smile, in admiration of her own cleverness.

"I believe the hiding-place is tolerably secure," replied the officer, with the air of one who desired to be convinced, but had not yet reached the point of full assurance.

"Yeou seem to be very particl'r and diffikilt to satisfy," continued Mrs. Morris; "but, if yeou don't believe it, jest come and see for you'sef."

She led the way to the bureau, opened the drawer, and, raising a plaid cotton handkerchief, displayed the contraband letters by the score. All were directed to the lottery firm, and were turned over to the knave from time to time as it suited his convenience to call for them. As no such firm did business at Wington Junction, it was the duty of the postmaster to forward to the department, as fictitious and undeliverable, all letters bearing the address of the swindlers. In similar cases neglect to obey the regulation was treated as sufficient ground for instant removal.

More fully pleased with the result of the examination than the woman surmised, the officer resumed: "I see you are very particular about your methods of doing business, and do not mean to be caught napping. The arrangement we are about to enter into is a very important one, and, as you are not postmaster, your husband will have to be present to witness and ratify the bargain."

"Bless yeour soul," replied she, "it's all right. I 'tend to all the biznis. My husband doesn't bother hisself abeout it in the least."

"Madam," answered the officer, "pardon me. I had my training in a large city, and am accustomed to pay minute attention to every detail. Your husband is the principal in this case, and must ratify the agreement to make it binding. Of course you will derive all the benefit, but his presence is essential as a matter of form."

Apparently satisfied, she called for "John," who replied promptly to the summons.

"Mr. Morris," said the officer, "your wife has agreed to keep my letters for me—"

"Yaas," broke in the postmaster. "I know'd she would. Yeou'll find she'll dew it right, tew. Nobody can't come enny tricks on her — can they, Sue? I wish one o' em durn'd deetectors would come areound, jest tew see heow she'd pull the wool over 'im. I wudn't ax enny better fun ;" and he indulged in



"Bless yeour sonl," replied she, "it's all right. I 'tend to all the bissnis.'"

a fit of loud cachinnation at the absurdity of supposing that any one could match in sharpness his own beloved Sue.

"The letters will come to that address," said the agent, pulling out his commission from the postmaster-general, and exhibiting it to the pair.

Taking in the purport of it at a glance, Morris jumped several inches into the air, slapped his sides, and exclaimed, "A deetector, arter all ; sold, by jingo !"

"We're bust'd, then," chimed in Sue, with a melancholy grin.

It was even so. The letters for Highfalutin & Co. went to Washington, and Morris went out of the post-office; but the fact that Sue was overmatched hurt him more than the loss of the place.

June 8, 1872, a law was approved making it a penal offense to use the mails for the purpose of defrauding others, whether residing within or outside of the United States. The post-master-general was also authorized to forbid the payment of postal money-orders to persons engaged in fraudulent lotteries, gift enterprises, and other schemes for swindling the public, and to instruct postmasters to return to the writers, with the word "fraudulent" written or stamped on the outside, all registered letters directed to such persons or firms. Prior to the enactment of this law, the most wholesale and barefaced operations were conducted by professional cheats, mainly through the facilities afforded by the mails, with almost absolute impunity. Letters addressed to bogus firms were indeed forwarded from the offices of delivery to the department as "fictitious" and "undeliverable," and many colluding post-masters were decapitated. Such petty measures of warfare served merely to annoy the vampires and to whet their diabolical ingenuity for the contrivance of new devices. Since the law of 1872 went into effect, however, the scoundrels have been compelled to travel a thorny road. Scores of arrests have been made, and in many cases the criminals have been sentenced to the penitentiary.

It would exceed our limits even to enumerate the devices which have been tried by different swindlers with greater or less success. Gift enterprises of various kinds are the most common and notorious, constituting a distinct branch of the business; but the pretenses on which human credulity is invited to part with actual cash for imaginary benefits are innumerable. A few specimens are given as illustrations.

AN OLD GAME REVIVED.

On the 18th of September, 1875, a fellow was arrested in West Virginia who sent to the victims whom he proposed to bleed, letters whereof the following is a copy :—

"A lady who boarded with me died on last Saturday of apoplexy. She left a trunk containing the following property: One very fine ladies' gold watch and chain, one ladies' gold necklace, six ladies' finger rings, earrings, and a great deal of ladies' clothing. Among other things was a letter addressed to you. I suppose you to be a relative of the deceased, and want to send you the trunk. When Miss Thompson died she left a board bill unpaid amounting to \$20.50. You will please send this amount by return mail, and the trunk will be forwarded to you immediately."

Instead of remitting the money as modestly requested, the recipient of one of these choice *douceurs*, a lady residing in the interior of Pennsylvania, sent the letter to the mayor of the town where it was dated and postmarked, who in turn handed it over to special agent T. P. Shallcross; and he in the course of a day or two succeeded in capturing the miscreant.

This particular form of the confidence game is very old; yet in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy-five, a swindler by means of it succeeds not only in maintaining himself in dashing style, but also in sporting a flashy traveling companion of the female persuasion!

Where the letters are addressed to men, the articles reported to be found in the imaginary trunk are changed to correspond to masculine habits and wants. The operators receive many singular and some entertaining replies. The following, dated long ago from a small town at the South, may serve as a sample, the orthography of the original being preserved :—

"COL. SNOWDEN."

" Dear Sir,—Yours received, and you say John is dead. Poor fellow ! I always expected it. Death runs in the family. Dyed suddenly of appleplexy — eat too many apples. Well, I always thought John would hurt himself eating apples. I s'pose you had him buried. You said nothing about funeral expenses. He had a trunk — gold watch in it, &c. Well, well, what an unexpected legacy ! but strange things happen sometimes. Never thought I should get a gold watch so. And he had the watch in his trunk, did he ? Poor fellow ! was always so particular 'bout his watch and fixings. Had two revolvers. What is them ? I never heard John say anything about them. Well, you have been so kind as to write to me ; just keep all the balance of the things, you can have them ; but the gold watch, send that to me by express. Send immediately if not sooner.

" Very truly,

"GEO. STREAM."

" P. S. My mother in law says, if you come this way, call. She likes to know all such good, kind folks."

It is safe to conclude that "Col. Snowden" never accepted the invitation to call from the hospitable mother-in-law.

A FORMIDABLE WEAPON.

In the summer and fall of 1875, circulars were scattered broadcast over the country, and advertisements appeared in the weekly editions of several leading papers of New York city and other large towns, setting forth the rare merits of a weapon of destruction called 'Allan's New Low-Priced Seven-Shooter.' As a specimen of ingenious description, the more salient parts of the circular are herewith reproduced :—

" In introducing this triumph of mechanical genius to the American public, it is proper to say that it is not an entirely new article, but that it has lately been improved in appearance, simplicity of construction, and accuracy, having new points of excellence, making it superior in many respects to those first made. The manufacturers having improved facilities for making them cheaply and rapidly, have reduced the price to one dollar and fifty cents ; and while

the profits on a single one are necessarily small, this price places them within the reach of all. It will in the future be known as 'ALLAN'S NEW LOW-PRICED SEVEN-SHOOTER.' The manufacturers are happy to announce, that, having a large force engaged in manufacturing them, no delay can possibly occur, and that all orders will be promptly filled the day received. Hundreds are being sent to every state and territory in the Union, and the manner in which they have been received by the sporting public is a true test of their merits, and proves beyond a doubt that a permanent reputation for them will soon be everywhere established, and that it will ultimately become a favorite. It is of the usual size of a pocket revolver, neatly finished, strongly made, and, if properly cared for, is *warranted* to be as good after three years' use as when first purchased, as it is not liable to get out of order. They can only be afforded so low because they are manufactured in large quantities, and because, wherever introduced, they *advertise themselves*. For every business man, traveler, sailor, hunter, fisherman, etc., it is absolutely necessary and indispensable. Everybody will have it. For agents 'there is nothing like it' To 'trade' on, 'it is just the thing.' The sale of ONE opens the market for a dozen in any neighborhood.

"We wish it distinctly understood that this is no cheap, good-for-nothing 'pop-gun ;' and while none can expect it to be 'silver-mounted' for \$1.50, they have a right to expect the worth of their money, and in this new improved seven-shooter a want is supplied.

"Great care is taken in the adjustment of EACH, so that ALL are equally good and reliable. In their production no trouble or expense has been spared. An elaborate and complete set of machinery and gauges has been made, by means of which all the parts are produced exactly alike, thus insuring great uniformity in the character of the work produced."

This remarkable implement, equally useful for peace or war, is offered to an eager public at the low price of \$1.50 each, or \$13 per dozen. On the score of cheapness, the inventor greatly prefers the mails to the express as a vehicle for the transport of his wares. In fact, he declines to patronize the express companies at all, unless a prepayment of twenty-five per cent. accompanies each order as a guaranty of the "purchaser's good faith."

At first the enterprise succeeded even beyond the most sanguine expectations of its projector, letters with the cash inclosed pouring in by the hundred. For several months, however, after the first publication of the advertisement, "this triumph of mechanical genius," though "not an entirely new article," existed only in the comprehensive brain of the gentleman who

had the greatness to discern in the imperfect work of predecessors the germs of ideal perfection. Having no seven-shooters to send, he was compelled to dishonor the requisitions of the expectant "traveler, sailor, hunter, fisherman, etc." While careful to lay aside the inclosures, he entirely forgot even to so far remember his patrons as to make a record of their names.

In due time, however, the "factory" went into operation, and the seven-shooters were actually produced. The mechanical "triumph," rudely made of a cheap metal composition, is a duplicate of a toy long used by boys to the delight of each other, and to the annoyance of their elders. The propulsive power resides in a steel spring, which has force enough to send a bird-shot across a good-sized room. The outfit would cost perhaps six or eight cents to the manufacturer. A portion of the orders were now filled, the greater part being still thrown unhonored into the waste-basket as before.

Curses both loud and deep began to be showered on the head of the swindler. Complaints having reached the department, special agent C. E. Henry started to hunt for "Wilcox & Co.," of Windsor, Ohio, for such was the direction in the advertisements and on the circular. Proceeding several miles from the nearest railroad, he found the rural settlement where the factory was supposed to be located.

Guided by various inquiries, he finally drove up to the small farm-house where the parents of Wilcox & Co. resided. On entering, the officer said, "I am in search of Mr. Wilcox, of the firm of Wilcox & Co."

"I am your man," remarked a youth, perhaps twenty-two years of age, whose countenance at once suggested acuteness and cunning. "What will you have?"

"I would like to take a look about the arsenal and gun-factory located here," replied the detective, leisurely surveying the landscape.

"The works are in Cleveland," answered the great inventor. "You can see them by calling there."

"But where is the arsenal? I understood it was situated here."

"Your information is correct," replied the young man. "That is it, across the road."

Casting his eye in the direction indicated, the officer saw a rickety wood-shed about seven feet by nine in size.

Observing the smile of amused incredulity that played upon



"'But where is the arsenal? I understood it was situated here.'—'Your information is correct,' replied the young man. 'That is it, across the road.'"

the features of his questioner, Wilcox reiterated, with an air of half offended dignity,—

"That's it. We keep our seven-shooters there. But look here; before this thing goes any further, I want to know who you are."

"O, certainly, sir," answered the stranger. "You will find nothing about me that I care to keep concealed. I am a spe-

cial agent of the post-office department, and my business here is to arrest you."

"Why, what have I done to warrant such a visit?" queried youthful innocence.

"I shall be happy to make that point clear to you," replied the detective, "though I am afraid the enlightenment will come too late to prove of much service to you. In using the mails for the purpose of swindling, you have violated the laws of the country, and must suffer the penalty."

"But where does the swindling come in?" expostulated Wilcox. "I advertised a seven-shooter. I didn't say anything about a revolver. It will shoot seven shot, or twice that number, if you only put them in. If anybody is green enough to suppose I meant a revolver, that's his lookout, not mine."

"We are not called upon to decide the point," said the special agent. "The question is one for the court and the jury. But you must go with me to Cleveland. So get ready."

Finding persuasion, argument, and remonstrance alike useless, the great mechanical genius packed his satchel in preparation for the journey. Once fairly on the road, he became communicative, and explained the reasons which led him to embark in the enterprise. "In the first place," said he, "I read Barnum's Life, and accepted the doctrine that the American people like to be humbugged. I planned the shooter myself, and, in wording the circular, aimed to cover the points and keep within the law. I think I have succeeded."

"I beg leave to differ," argued the special agent. "Aside from the general falsity of the description, there are specific claims which you cannot make good."

"I don't see the matter in that light," replied the champion of the seven-shooter. "I say, 'Wherever introduced, they advertise themselves.' Well, don't they? Whoever gets one will be apt to tell his neighbors. Isn't that advertising itself? I also say, 'The sale of one opens the market for a dozen in any neighborhood;' but observe, I don't claim that any more will be sold in that neighborhood, even if the market is opened.

So far as my guaranty is concerned, I only warrant them to be as good after three years' use as when first purchased. Will you, or will any court, call that in question?"

"It is charged," said the officer, changing the subject, "that you neglected to fill a good many orders. How do you explain that?"

"Why, to furnish the shooter and pay the postage cuts down the profits terribly," was the unique and characteristic reply.

Orders began to arrive in response to the circular nearly five months before the first shooter came from the hands of the manufacturer; and as none of them were ever filled, or even recorded, it is impossible to estimate how many dupes long watched the mails in anxious expectancy, and perhaps attributed their disappointment to dishonesty among the employés of the department.

Of course the papers which printed the advertisement would have spurned the impostor and exposed the fraud, had they discovered the facts. The most scrupulous and careful publishers are often deceived in the character of advertisements that come through the regular channels of business, and appear plausible on their face. In fact, the religious journals are the favorite vehicles of the swindlers. The solicitude felt by the newspapers, not only for their own reputation, but for the interests of their patrons, was illustrated in the correspondence found on the person of Wilcox. An influential western journal had addressed him two notes which ran thus:—

"GENTS: We receive frequent letters from subscribers, saying they receive no answers to letters they send you containing money for '7-shooters.' How is it? Are you swindlers?"

Wilcox, though fully able to answer the conundrum, did not see fit to do so; and hence, on the 3d of November, the same parties deployed their forces to renew the charge.

"—, Nov. 3, 1875.

"WILCOX & Co.:

"We have written you once before, that our patrons complain to us that you do not fill their cash orders, and will not answer their letters of inquiry as to why you don't. We have received so many such that we suspect there is something wrong, and, unless you explain satisfactorily, we will have to expose you."

As the special agent arrived on the same day with the inquiry, the young man had no opportunity to make the desired explanation. Indeed it is doubtful if one so modest and reticent on matters of personal merit, would have answered the question even if permitted to take all winter to do it in.

The United States commissioner, while fully recognizing the ingenuity of the circular, differed somewhat from its author in interpreting its legal construction, and accordingly placed him under a bond of fifteen hundred dollars to appear for trial.

The Deacon's Daughter.



Rebecca Starr.

they tilled, and generally inherited the religion, the politics, and the prejudices of their fathers along with the ancestral acres. When crimes, or "irregularities," break out in such communities, their strangeness and entire lack of sympathy with the general surroundings greatly intensify the public surprise, and, if the circumstances are aggravated, the public indignation.



HE Valley," dotted with farm-houses, and sprinkled with small villages, was a favorite summer resort for a class of people from New York and one or two other cities, who preferred fine scenery, pure air, and wholesome food to the crush of crowded watering-places. The incidents of the story to be narrated occurred many years ago, long before the locomotive had profaned the sanctities of nature by its shriek, or dragged into this quiet region the more turbulent elements of modern progress. The inhabitants were mostly born on the soil that

A mail-route sixty miles long, connecting two parallel lines of railway, wound through the valley, and was served with commendable regularity. At length robberies began to occur, the complaints pouring in upon special agent B. K. Sharretts, of New York city, with alarming frequency. Commencing at the northern end of the chain, he became convinced, by a series of careful experiments, that the terminal office and the two next in the order of sequence, were entirely free from trouble.

As the distance from New York was short, the special agent conducted the investigation at odd intervals, as the exigencies of business permitted. For some time not a loss occurred while he was engaged on the line, yet a few days after his departure perhaps half a dozen complaints would be thrown at him in a lump. The sufferers were among the wealthiest and most responsible people in the valley, so that there could be no doubt about the reality of the robberies.

On tabulating the reported losses, the detective discovered that they all fell in brief periods of activity, separated by long intervals of repose. For three or four days, and sometimes for a week, the malady seemed to rage with great fury, and then, as if the violence of the disease had exhausted its energy, no further symptom of disorder would appear for a month. Knowing well that perseverance would eventually lead him to the hidden source of the infection, he worked away patiently, though with rather discouraging progress.

The route, supplying the country like an artery, was tapped on each side by tributaries, but the losses all occurred in matter passing over the main line, and, by gradual accumulation, located the thief with tolerable certainty at one of two offices, Bellevue or Beulah.

The robber appeared to care little for money, but had an insatiable appetite for choice articles of female adornment, such as gloves, collars, ribbons, lace, and jewelry. For three days the detective tested the two offices referred to without getting a nibble; but on the fourth, upon opening the pouch

before it reached Greenwood, the office next south of Beulah, he missed a package containing some delicate articles of female apparel.

The mail-driver, whose co-operation was indispensable, kept the secrets of the investigation inviolate, as an honest man and good citizen should. At the next settlement the detective hired a conveyance, and returned by the shortest road to Bellevue, expecting to find the author of all the mischief at that place. Having secured quarters at the hotel, which was well filled at the time with summer boarders from the large cities, he started to find Judge Winchester, an old acquaintance, and in point of wealth and enterprise the leading spirit of the town. In addition to high character and sound judgment, the judge possessed a thorough knowledge of the people for miles around, so that his opinion was likely to be valuable.

Taking him one side, the detective proceeded to explain the situation. "As you are aware, judge, a great many robberies have occurred somewhere on the line of this route. As the rifled letters usually contain articles of female apparel, and as there are a great many young ladies from abroad stopping at your hotel, I am inclined to the belief that the thief is at this place, and that he is lavishing the plunder upon some too highly favored friend. I have just reached Bellevue in the progress of my investigations, and desire information in regard to the employés of the post-office here."

"You are not apt to be wrong," replied the judge; "but in this case you are decidedly mistaken. The mail passes here in broad daylight. The pouch is opened in the corner of a store, exposed to the view of every one, and more or less spectators are always present. It is never delayed over fifteen minutes. The postmaster, an old bachelor of the most exemplary character, attends to all the business in person, and you can imagine about how much use he would have for such gewgaws."

"But, judge," reasoned the detective, "how do you account for the missing package? I know it was in the pouch when it

reached this office, and I am equally certain it was not to be found when I overhauled the mail a couple of miles this side of Greenwood. It only passed through Bellevue and Beulah, and I hurried back fully expecting to find the trouble here. I have not yet tested Beulah — ”

“ No, and you need not,” interrupted the judge. “ The postmaster, Deacon Matthew Starr, is one of the most wealthy and worthy men in the county. The office was established at that locality chiefly for his personal convenience, though a number of neighbors are also accommodated. I will stake my reputation on his integrity to the most minute particular. It is idle for you to waste time there. You must be mistaken, Sharretts, about that package, for, notwithstanding your strong conviction to the contrary, I am satisfied it never reached this office. The slippery spot is above here.”

Seeing that further argument would be likely to provoke the bluff, obstinate, headstrong old judge, who from long control in the affairs of the village had acquired the mental habits of an autocrat, the detective appeared to yield the point, though absolutely certain that there was no error in his observations. “ Well, judge, we are all liable to make mistakes, and perhaps I have in this instance. If so, I must load and fire again, taking surer aim.”

Afterwards the conversation turned upon the old families of the county, and, without apparent design, the special agent drew forth a full account of the household of Deacon Matthew Starr. The worthy deacon had a pretty daughter about nineteen years old, who was then attending the school of Madam Gasparin. In addition to the regular vacations, she enjoyed frequent furloughs, spending the time either among relatives in a neighboring city, or under the parental roof. According to the judge, she came home “ very seldom,” a phrase that on more exact interpretation proved to mean, from once a fortnight to once a month.

This information suggested a queer and rather startling theory. Remembering that the depredations occurred at sim-

ilar intervals, the detective was so forcibly struck with the coincidence, that he was about to call the attention of the judge to the point, when the clang of the gong drowned their voices and broke up the conference.

At dinner, the mind of the detective was much more active than his fork. In fact, he was absorbed with the late discovery, and felt that at last he grasped the key to the troublesome mystery. After a light repast, he sauntered out with the purpose of dealing frankly with Judge Winchester. The old gentleman would not betray confidence or screen guilt. It would be necessary to use Bellevue as a base of operations, and if the judge should see him there and suspect that he was attempting to detect a thief at Beulah, he might regard the proceeding as an act of bad faith, and hence allow his indignation to hurry him into some ill-advised speech or action that would frustrate the enterprise.

The judge soon made his appearance among the guests who were lounging and smoking on the piazza. Calling him aside, the officer remarked, "I have been reflecting upon the subject of our late conversation, and am sorry to feel compelled to express the conviction that we shall find the cause of the trouble in Miss Rebecca Starr, the daughter of the deacon."

"Sharretts, what on earth do you mean?" replied the judge, recoiling as if a snake had struck him. "I thought you were a detective—a first-class detective, that could see where others were blind. Have I been humbugged in my good opinion? I dislike exceedingly to have my idols broken, but if this is a specimen of your discernment, I shall have to give you up. Why, my dear sir, you were never more mistaken. The bare suspicion is preposterous. Deacon Starr has but two children, a son and daughter, and the son is already well provided for. Miss Rebecca is the pet of her parents, and they lavish money upon her without stint. A wish needs only to be expressed to be gratified. She is the favorite, too, of a millionaire uncle, who has no children of his own, and whose purse is fairly thrust upon her. In view of the facts, can you entertain for a

moment the monstrous proposition that a young lady of abundant means, intelligent, cultivated, and refined, connected by ties of blood and social intimacy with the first people of the state,—a young lady who has enjoyed every advantage that money and position can confer,—would stoop to the degradation of robbing the mails for the sake of a few foolish trifles, or indeed for any consideration whatever?"



"'Sharretts, what on earth do you mean? I thought you were a detective—a first class detective. Have I been humbugged in my good opinion?'"

As he went on, the judge waxed eloquent in repelling even the half whispered reflection upon the fair fame of the household of his old and honored friend. Too late the detective discovered that with all the prudence born of experience he was again the victim of misplaced confidence. It is hard to persuade a man to listen to reason where he can see nothing but folly.

"You must excuse me, judge, if I have been a little fast," apologized the officer. "We form the habit of extemporizing theories to explain facts, and often have to abandon them as new light is thrown upon a case. You know all about the people living in this vicinity, and far be it from me to pit any hastily formed conclusion of mine against your mature and carefully weighed opinions."

The appearance of submission struck the amiable but half angered old gentleman on his vulnerable side, and, seizing the hand of the officer, he laughingly remarked, "An error frankly confessed is more than half redressed. I will instruct the jury to bring in a verdict of 'not guilty.'"

However, the resolution of the special agent was fully taken to give the office at Beulah a thorough test, and he was willing to hazard his reputation as a "theorizer" on the result. It was desirable to secure the aid to a certain degree of some resident of the place who knew the Starrs, and could keep informed of their movements. Sometimes the party thus pressed into service does his work well, without suspecting for a moment that he is unwittingly playing a hand in a serious game. In this, fortune favored the detective.

Soon the steamboat landed at the wharf, and among the passengers was an old New York acquaintance, Mr. Edward Osborne. After a warm shake of the hand, the New-Yorker remarked with some enthusiasm, "Let me present you to my traveling companion, Mr. Henry Allen, of Beulah, just below here."

Both had left the boat; Osborne for a few days' rest in the country, and Allen to return home. Here was the opportunity to begin. Accordingly the officer strove to make himself particularly agreeable to Mr. Henry Allen, and succeeded even beyond expectation. The gentleman promised, after visiting home, to return to the hotel to spend the evening.

Meanwhile the special agent explained the situation to Osborne, who was already somewhat familiar with his exploits as a detective, and was now eager to lend a helping hand.

Said the officer, "I must arrange through some one to learn when Miss Starr expects to return home, and how long she intends to remain."

"I can manage that for you easily enough," replied the New-Yorker; "only let me do it in my own way."

"Very well," answered the agent; "I shall depend upon your watchfulness and ingenuity. Use your own methods, but give me the information."

Late in the evening he met the two gentlemen apparently by accident in the billiard-room, when Osborne remarked, in a semi-confidential tone intended for the exclusive benefit of his comrade from Beulah, "I guess I'm booked for the season. There is an heiress below here, young and beautiful, whose acquaintance I'm half crazy to make. As she is not at home, I propose to wait for her return; and for the moral support of my friend Allen, I intend to throw the weight of my influence in his favor in a certain quarter where he may need it."

With that he turned full upon the detective, and brought the lids of his sinister orb quickly together, in token of self-commendation over the brilliant opening of the play. The subject was dropped, and shortly after Allen took leave for the night.

Osborne then unfolded with considerable glee his little plot. He was to remain at Bellevue, and Allen was to notify him promptly of the expected return of Miss Rebecca, when he would at once telegraph the fact to the special agent, who was to return to New York.

The next morning, on the way home, the officer purchased in a neighboring city three ladies' collars. At his request, a female clerk in attendance ripped open the ends, when he wrote his own name on the inside in indelible ink, and the seams were closed again.

On the following Monday he received this telegram from Bellevue: —

"Caravan just arrived. Will exhibit here three days.
"OSBORNE."

Without delay he packed a small valise, and hurried to the scene of action. The steamboat reached the wharf at an early hour, but his faithful ally was there to meet him. Miss Starr reached home the day the dispatch was sent, and might remain through the week. On some pretense Osborne was to delay the ceremony of presentation till the detective had a chance to try his skill.



The mail did not reach Bellevue for several hours. At the appointed time, however, the ancient vehicle rolled into the village. The special agent had three packages in readiness, addressed to three different offices below, and as the pouch was about to be closed, stepped up to the postmaster, introduced himself officially, dropped in the decoys, and saw the bag locked and placed on the mail wagon. One of the letters contained the three collars.

For his own conveyance he had previously arranged to have a carriage at the door of

the hotel, and on the way thither rather unfortunately met Judge Winchester. The old gentleman seemed to be annoyed at the sudden reappearance of the detective, and inquired brusquely, "You here again? What's in the wind now?"

"O, nothing in particular, may it please the court," re-

"At his request, a female clerk ripped open the ends, when he wrote his own name on the inside in indelible ink."

sponded the agent; and, not caring after his late experience to indulge the worthy magnate in further confidences, he hurried on to the hotel, stepped into the carriage, and was off on a lively trot.

It was a beautiful day in summer. The smooth, level road gradually widened into a broad highway, lined on each side with cultivated fields, interspersed with occasional patches of forest. Further on, the drive passed under a long arch of overhanging elms, which some beneficent patriarch of a former generation had planted by the roadside for the benefit of posterity. The limbs of the stately trees interlacing overhead formed a delightful screen to protect the traveler from the sun. Quaint and old-fashioned but spacious houses, some of them built in the last century, still gave shelter to the descendants of the original settlers. On a beautiful elevation, sloping gently to the street, stood a fine old residence, conspicuous for size and for the elegance of its surroundings, which, from the description that had been given him, the officer recognized at once as the homestead of the Starrs, and the present location of the Beulah post-office.

Not a speck dimmed the pure white exterior of the baronial mansion, save where the deep verdure of vines, crawling in and out of the trellis-work, or twining around the balcony-posts and hanging in graceful festoons from above, toned down the brightness that otherwise would have been too glairy to please the eye. The lawn in front, laid out by an artist in landscape gardening, showed minute attention to details. Hedge-rows walled in the various walks, and about the grounds flowers bloomed in endless profusion. The place seemed to be the chosen abode of innocence, of taste, and of purity. One could hardly suspect that crime lurked in such a home without an uneasy dread of the retribution threatened against harsh, unfounded, and cruel judgments.

As he drove on, his moralizing was interrupted by the rumble of distant thunder. A black cloud shot upward from the western horizon, and threw a curtain over the sun, typical

perhaps of a far more somber curtain soon to drop its dark folds over a house that had braved the storms for generations, with no seam to betray weakness, and no spot to sully its fame.

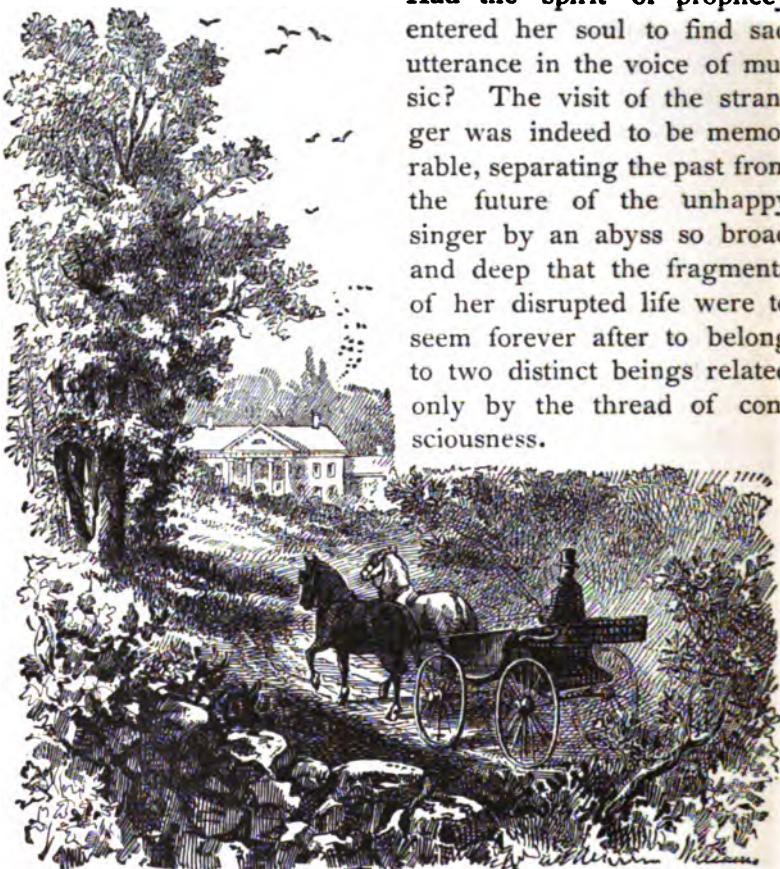
The officer drove slowly, to allow the mail wagon to overtake him ; but so many vehicles were abroad that no opportunity to examine the pouch was presented till they had nearly accomplished the seven miles between Beulah and Greenwood. He finally succeeded, however, and, on emptying the contents of the sack, found that two of the three packages were missing. One of the stolen letters contained the marked collars.

In view of the lateness of the hour and the threatening aspect of the clouds, the special agent decided to defer further operations till the next day, and accordingly drove back on a brisk trot by the shortest cut to Bellevue. It might be hazardous to permit so much time to elapse before descending on the lair of the robber ; but in hunting for the contents of rifled decoys, one is compelled to risk certain chances, as precipitancy and procrastination are about equally dangerous, and prescience counts for little where so much depends on the caprice of the thief.

At half past ten o'clock the next morning, the officer drove up to the hitching-post in front of Deacon Starr's grounds. Brushing off the surplus dust, — for the storm of the previous afternoon began and ended in blackness and wind, — he strolled slowly up the graveled walk to the front door, which stood open. He knocked, but there was no response. Entering the hall, he found the door to the parlor also open. No fear of thieves or burglars ever disturbed evidently the serenity of the household. While to outward appearance the establishment was deserted, sounds of music came from the drawing-room in the rear of the parlor. The air, sung in a sweet, melodious, cultivated voice, with an accompaniment executed brilliantly on the piano, was from the opera of the "Bohemian Girl," — "You'll Remember Me." Had the

shadow of coming events already fallen darkly across the pathway of the poor girl? Was she half consciously singing a dirge over the sunny years of youth, whose cloudless joy and splendor were to be wrecked by the gathering tempest?

Had the spirit of prophecy entered her soul to find sad utterance in the voice of music? The visit of the stranger was indeed to be memorable, separating the past from the future of the unhappy singer by an abyss so broad and deep that the fragments of her disrupted life were to seem forever after to belong to two distinct beings related only by the thread of consciousness.



The Deacon's Mansion.

The performer was so wholly engrossed in the music that the caller was obliged to knock loudly before the raps were heard above the plaintive heart-cries of the song. At length her attention was attracted; the music stopped, and was

succeeded by the rustle of female garments. The folding-doors leading into the front room rolled back, and in the embrasure stood a girl of eighteen or twenty, whom the stranger knew instinctively to be Miss Rebecca Starr. Tall, willowy, and graceful, with dark, lustrous eyes, and hair of raven blackness, the effect of which was intensified by contrast with a white rose that nestled in its luxuriant coils, her face and figure, replete with maidenly dignity, seemed to exact the deference recognized as due to cultivated womanhood. The officer, accustomed to turmoil and danger, to handling all sorts of criminals from the desperado to the sneak, was now ready to exclaim, —

"Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The armed rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble!"

Perplexed and embarrassed, the officer wished himself anywhere else on the face of the green earth. But he had embarked on the voyage, and retreat was impossible. As the beautiful creature looked at him inquiringly, he was compelled to account for his presence in some way, and hence remarked apologetically, —

"I have probably made a mistake; if so, I trust you will pardon me. But when I entered I was under the impression that the post-office was kept here, and desired to make some inquiries."

"You are not mistaken, sir," replied she, in a low, sweet voice; "the office is kept in a room across the hall."

"Can I see the postmaster?"

"Not now, sir. He has gone to call on a neighbor, and may be absent several hours."

"May I inquire who has charge of the office in his absence?"

"O, sir, there is very little to be done, and father attends to that."

At the same time she walked past the officer to the open

window, when he discovered encircling her fair neck one of the identical collars he had mailed the day before. All doubts were now cleared away, leaving no excuse for further tremulousness or hesitation.

"Will you please give me your name?" said he, blandly.

"Rebecca Starr," replied she, with a slight quaver, as if agitated by the mild, subdued earnestness of the questioner.

"Miss Starr, be good enough to be seated; I have something to say to you."

With a slight flush and a sudden start, she replied,—

"I will call my mother."

"Perhaps, Miss Starr, you had better remain a moment. If you knew the object of my visit, you might prefer to have the interview, for the present at least, private."

To this somewhat ominous remark she ventured no reply, but dropping into a chair nervelessly, as if divining the nature of the business, waited in evident suspense for the next revelation. Though exceedingly pained to wound in any way the feelings of the unfortunate girl, the officer knew that all that loveliness of exterior but thinly masked the heart of a thief. Was she the victim of some mental malady, evanescent and curable, that temporarily overmastered the warnings of reason, or were her crimes the outcome of a perverted and hardened soul? In the beautiful economy of nature, outward grace usually gives assurance of inward excellence. Expression is the reflex of countless thoughts and actions, that gradually mold muscles and light the eye. He tried to fathom the mysteries of that face, but in vain. Nature, unerring nature, seemed to be at fault, and to have graven there misleading characters.

The pause, however, must be broken; and he inquired, with an air of authority,—

"Where did you get the collar which I see upon your neck?"

Though coloring deeply, she replied with deliberation,—

"I bought it in New York."

"Did you buy more than one, Miss Starr?"

"Yes, sir, I bought a dozen."

"Will you be kind enough, Miss Starr, to remove the one you are wearing, and to bring me the others."

Without manifesting the least surprise, or disposition to question the authority of the stranger, she unpinned the article and placed it in his hands. Leaving the room, she soon returned with three others, entirely dissimilar, and showing marks of long service.

Without appearing to notice the fact, however, the stranger requested her to be seated. Taking out his commission from the postmaster-general, and pointing to his own name and official designation, he asked her to hold the document, while with a penknife he ripped open a seam in the collar, and showed her the same name written on a small slip of linen that had been inserted.

Dropping the commission from her trembling hands, she burst into tears, and exclaimed, —

"O, sir ! did you do that to catch me?"

"I did it," replied the officer with deep feeling, "to catch the person who has long been robbing the mails on this route; and I cannot tell you how grieved I am to find in the offender, not a poor wretch tempted perhaps by hunger, or maddened by evil passions, but a lady in the bloom of youth and beauty, surrounded by influences fitted to stimulate noble aims and to encourage the development of the highest virtues. My position is painful; but I am compelled to follow where duty leads, however thorny the path."

Thereupon, losing self-control, the poor girl started to give way to a paroxysm of grief; but her thoughts were diverted into a different channel under the skillful guidance of the detective. Like one having authority, he uttered the word of command.

"Stop crying : it will do no good. You must summon all

your fortitude, for you have a task to perform. Sit down at that table and write out for me a detailed account, so far as you can remember, of your improper transactions. State when you began this unfortunate business, how much money you have taken, and what articles of dress or ornament. State



"Dropping the commission from her trembling hands, she burst into tears, and exclaimed, 'O, sir! did you do that to catch me?'"

also what disposition you have made of the property, and give the names of the parties who have been wronged, with memoranda of what properly belongs to each one."

She obeyed passively, as if exercising no independent will

of her own. As the detective watched the growth of the dismal catalogue of thefts, he could not help giving way to profound and sorrowful meditation. He remembered that he was a minister of the law, and that the law knew no difference between that sweet-faced girl, reared in the lap of luxury, and watched over from infancy with the tenderest solicitude, and the hardened criminal from the slums. It was not for him to question the wisdom or justice of the law; yet the thought of arresting this highly favored and accomplished young girl was so repellent that he determined to save her, if possible, from the ignominy and ruin of such a fate. Though guilty, no jury would convict her, no tribunal would demand her apprehension. Connected with the best families in the state, with uncounted wealth to draw upon for the gratification of the most extravagant desires, she was sure of an outburst of charity from the public so generous that it would hide every fault under the folds of its capacious mantle; while, if the case came to the courts, the plea of insanity would be certain to save her from the disgrace of imprisonment. Under the circumstances, the officer decided that if rigorous steps were to be instituted, it must be at the instance of an authority higher than his. "Blood is thicker than water," as those charged with the execution of unpleasant duties often experience to their embarrassment; and it is a tolerably safe rule, where one is at a loss to decide what course he ought to pursue, to err, if err he must, in the interests of humanity. One mistake at least is less injurious than two.

She consumed, perhaps, fifteen minutes in preparing the schedule, which she handed to the officer. The task over, the tension on her nerves became too severe to be borne; and, throwing herself upon the sofa, she wept piteously. "Pray be calm," urged the kind-hearted official. "What would your neighbors think, if any of them should drop in and find you in this condition. Sit up and dry your tears. Affairs may turn out much better than you anticipate."

Controlled and soothed by the magnetism of a will so much stronger than her own, she became quiet, and, passing into the back parlor, resumed her seat at the piano; but the effort to play proved vain. The spirit of melody had fled.

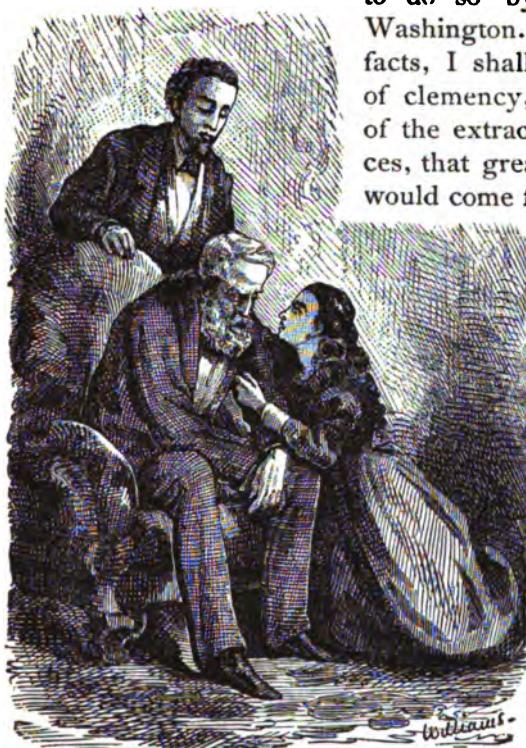
According to the schedule, she had stolen in the aggregate about ninety dollars in money, and various articles, embracing gloves, lace, jewelry, etc., estimated in the letters of complaint from the sufferers to be worth one hundred and fifty dollars more. She confessed a number of thefts which had never been reported to the department; but the complaints in the hands of the agent agreed, so far as they went, with the statements in the schedule. Nearly all whose correspondence had been despoiled lived in the neighborhood, and were friends or acquaintances of the family.

Deacon Starr soon returned, when another painful duty devolved on the agent. The old gentleman had long before passed the meridian of life, and a frank, open, benevolent face bore abundant testimony to the excellence of his character. He little surmised, when invited to a seat in his own parlor, what a terrible blow was about to fall upon him. Briefly and gently the situation was explained. Rage succeeded the shock of astonishment. Driven almost frantic by the intelligence, and stung with resentment that years of watchful care and devoted affection should be thus requited, he started to lay violent hands upon the cowering girl. It required all the tact and persuasiveness of the detective to rescue the daughter from the wrath of the father. He reasoned and pleaded for the erring child as earnestly as if his own fate, and not that of another, hung upon the issue. At length, anger yielded to pity, and, clasping in his arms the frail penitent, the fond parent exclaimed in broken accents, "My child, my child! if the whole world unites in calling you a sinner, the heart of your poor old father will be a safe home for you always — only it does ache a little now, Rebecca."

After comparative calm had been restored, the officer called

the father aside, and, having expressed in few words his own earnest sympathy for the family in its troubles, explained his purposes in regard to the case. Said he, "It is not my intention to press the charges against your daughter unless directed

to do so by the authorities at Washington. In reporting the facts, I shall urge the exercise of clemency, believing, in view of the extraordinary circumstances, that great harm and no good would come from a rigorous execution of the law. If mercy is shown to the wrong-doer, full restitution must be made to all who have suffered by her misconduct. Here is a list made out by your daughter;" handing him the paper.



"My child, my child! if the whole world unites in calling you a sinner, the heart of your poor old father will be a safe home for you always — only it does ache a little now, Rebecca."

rest easy till this has been done. But you must aid me, for in my distracted condition I am unable to manage a business of this delicacy without provoking suspicions which would annoy me greatly and benefit no one."

"I shall be most happy, Deacon Starr," replied the officer,

"to serve you in any way in my power; and after the decision of the department is received, I will return and attend to the details. Meanwhile I shall hold you responsible for the appearance of your daughter."

Both father and child grasped warmly the hand of the special agent as he took his departure, for both regarded him as a friend.

Four days later he returned. During the interim he had communicated the facts to the department, and received its sanction for what he had done and for what he proposed to do. But what a change those four days had wrought in the appearance of Rebecca Starr! The luster had vanished from her eye, the color from her cheeks, and the elasticity from her step. Pale, haggard, apprehensive, she showed how far the iron had entered her soul. When it was announced that the authorities had consented to condone the offense, her face brightened somewhat at the good news, but the deep furrows plowed by mental agony still bore silent witness to the intensity of her suffering.

It now only remained to settle the losses. During the absence of the officer, Miss Rebecca had made a few additions to the list, which covered all thefts that she could remember, and embraced every case reported to the department, besides many others which first came to the knowledge of the special agent through her confession. Deacon Starr placed in his hands the funds required to indemnify the sufferers, and he set forth on the mission. In a large majority of instances the persons called upon manifested no disposition to inquire why or how their money, or the value of their lost goods, was restored to them by a strange official, either from a mistaken idea, quite prevalent even among well-informed people, that the post-office department is responsible for the valuables intrusted to its custody, or because the feeling of joy at the recovery of the missing treasures overpowered the weaker emotion of curiosity. A few asked troublesome questions, but were easily bluffed and shaken off. One old gentleman,

however, who had long been the active "justice of the peace" for the township, seemed to think that, in virtue of his official station, it was his duty to inquire into all mysterious proceedings, and to suffer nothing outside the ordinary current of events to pass unchallenged. The scenes that took place at his house, and one or two episodes of a subsequent date, are so unique that they will perhaps bear description, though connected incidentally only with the fortunes of Rebecca Starr.

Nearly all the losses had been satisfactorily settled, only three or four names on the list remaining uncrossed. The next person to be visited in the order of convenience was "Squire Van Buskirk," and thither accordingly the special agent proceeded. The home of the dignitary proved to be a neat cottage or imitation villa, with the traditional veranda in front; and a sign tacked on one of the posts announced that therein dwelt "George Van Buskirk, Justice of the Peace."

The latch of the outer gate closed with a sharp, admonitory click as the officer entered the inclosure. The bell was answered by a neatly dressed and rather pretty girl of fifteen or sixteen, who invited the stranger into the parlor, and then, with a queer, hesitating look at the folding-doors in the rear of the apartment, stepped out to hunt up the master of the establishment.

The furniture of the room, though plain and antiquated, was tastefully arranged. A piano stood in one corner, and the vases were filled with freshly cut flowers. While meditating on the sad events which, it was to be feared, had blasted forever the prospects of a young and beautiful girl, the visitor was aroused from his reverie by a low, half stifled sigh, as if from a weary soul that in the struggle to suppress a great grief, finding the strain unbearable, had given utterance to the moan because absolute repression was longer impossible. Turning from the open window through which he was gazing abstractedly upon the fields, he was surprised

to find another person in the room, for no footfall, however gentle, had announced the new arrival. In front of the folding-doors, staring at him intently, stood an elderly woman, dressed in dark material entirely destitute of ornament, with long hair waving freely about her face, and an expression that defied analysis. Once certainly those features had been hand-



"Apparently satisfied that no one was near to interrupt the colloquy, she said, 'Are you the human crittur that wants to see my old man?'"

some, and, notwithstanding the ravages of time and trouble, they were still not uncomely. From the stranger her eye darted to the door and about the apartment as if apprehensive of danger from some unseen source. Apparently satisfied that no one was near to interrupt the colloquy, in an uncultivated but by no means disagreeable voice, she broke the

silence. "Are you the human crittur that wants to see my old man?"

Under the impression that the girl had been unable to find the "squire," and had sent the quaint old woman as substitute, the visitor bowed graciously, and replied, "Yes, madam, I did wish to see Squire Van Buskirk; but if you are his wife, as I surmise, I can perhaps —"

Without waiting for the completion of the sentence, she glided forward noiselessly from her position on the opposite side of the room, and, with another deep, low sigh, remarked gently, "Be seated, sir," and at the same time dropped into a chair herself.

The atmosphere of the room was growing oppressive. "If this is a specimen of the household," thought the gentleman, "the sooner I am off the better." However, not to be too abrupt, he thanked the lady for her courtesy, and obeyed. "Premising," began he, "that I am addressing Mrs. Van Buskirk," — here he paused for some token of affirmation, but none came, unless another sigh could be so construed, — "I have called in reference to a valuable letter mailed to your husband, which, I am informed, failed to reach him. If so, the value of the contents will be refunded."

"Sir," said the old lady with severity, "this is no place for a man of your character."

"Eh! what, my dear madam?" answered he, completely astounded at her sudden and unaccountable change of demeanor, "you surely must have misunderstood me."

"No, no — no!" she exclaimed, waving her hands in promiscuous gesticulation, and sweeping from the table a pile of books, "it is no mistake. It is true — true, true."

Here a reflex movement of her elbow knocked off a glass lamp, which with the shade was shivered to pieces on the floor. Not seeming to notice the catastrophe, she continued, raising her voice to a scream, "'Tis true! Hepzibah Van Buskirk knows you. You shall not touch that clock of mine again. It ain't stopped strikin' since you fixed it. Don't you

hear it?" She placed one hand to her ear, and listened intently.

The officer felt piqued. Long experience had taught him to bear compliments and petulance with like equanimity, but he was now at a loss to surmise what there was in his appearance which caused the matron to mistake him for an itinerant clock-mender. From the first he saw that she was strange and eccentric, and he now began to suspect that she was a lunatic. The surmise ripened into conviction as she rose from the chair, and, standing on one foot, began to crow in a low, measured tone that rapidly swelled in volume till the clamor filled the house. The situation was becoming exceedingly painful to the unbidden guest, when the impromptu concert came to a sudden close at the sound of approaching steps. Breaking off abruptly in the midst of a surpassing effort that might have excited the envy of the noisiest shanghai in the flock, as the familiar footfall caught her ear, she waltzed toward the folding-doors, without a word or look of adieu, and disappeared.

A few seconds later an old gentleman entered from the hall, and, as he made no allusion to the visible confusion and ruin, the visitor remained equally silent in regard to the manner of his entertainment. "Squire Van Buskirk, I presume?"

"Yas, sir. What kin I do for yeou?"

"In May last you lost a letter, squire, containing ten dollars. I am a special agent of the post-office department, and have called to make the amount good."

"Yeou say I lost a letter with ten dollars in it? Yeou seem to know more abeout my matters than I do. It is kuerious that a total stranger should be prenaterally informed of my affairs, isn't it neow? It falls right into the spear of my judisviction as justice of the peace to know facks, so that if any adjestification is called for, I can act peromptly."

"Squire, you are laboring under some misapprehension. There is no legal difficulty in this case. I simply wish to see you about a letter written to you by Mr. ——, and said to contain ten dollars."

"Yas (what mout I call your name?), I'm aperiently experienced on that pint, adzactly, adzactly, yas, yas. But heow a man that don't bee long in these ere parts comes to git enny idee of this, is what prosterates my kalkelashuns. Kum take a cheer. What did yeou say yeour name was?"

The stranger had not yet given his name, but not wishing to delay business by withholding immaterial "facks," he answered, "Sharretts."

"Yas, wall, Mr. Shattucks, this is rayther an extereadinary biznis of yeourn, and I'm opinionated yeou can't play enny of yeour sharp tricks on me. Yeou compre'nd I'm justice of the peace, and by Cezar I've got to find out heow yeou kum to know I lost a letter when I didn't know it myself. Yeou hav' got to give some 'count of this perceedin'; for sartain sure, there's suthin' abeout it that needs rektifyin'. Mout I ask who yeou be?"

"Certainly, sir. I am an officer of the post-office department. We have had complaints of losses by mail in this vicinity, and your excellent neighbor, Deacon Starr, the post-master, though not personally responsible, desires for some reason, as might be expected from his just and generous nature, to indemnify the sufferers fully. I have called to repay you. Please write a receipt."

"No, sir, Mr. Skerry; not one cent of Deekun Starr's money for me. I don't feel sartain it's mine. I don't know that I've lost enny, and heow yeou found it out is what tarnally mysteries me. Here's whar my pints of law kum in. I've bin justice of the peace for mor'n thirty year, and perpose to adjesticate this questi'n 'cordin' to the percedents."

The worthy magistrate, who had stood so long on the ramparts of justice, was here interrupted in the midst of his eloquence. With a sudden bang the folding-doors flew open, and the late hostess pirouetted into the parlor, brandishing an old clock-face with a vehemence that suggested broken crockery, if not broken heads. Not at all disturbed by the warlike demonstration, the squire rose, and simply remarking, "My

wife's a leetle off her pins abeout the head ; " he gently disarmed her, and followed her into the back room, closing the doors behind him.

" Now is my chance," thought the officer ; and he bolted out of the house with very unusual precipitation.

It was the work of a moment to untie the horse and jump



"The squire emerged from the door, and in elaborate legal verbiage commanded him to stop. Not to be outdone, the Amazon of the clock-face added a defiant crow."

into the buggy. As he gathered up the reins, the squire emerged from the door, and in elaborate legal verbiage commanded him to stop. Not to be outdone, the Amazon of the clock-face added a defiant crow by way of chorus. The horse started off at a brisk trot, however, and the cottage with its odd inmates soon disappeared in the distance.

Other matters so engrossed the time and attention of the

special agent that Beulah and its people soon passed out of mind. Several weeks later, however, the subject was recalled by the receipt of a number of letters, addressed to different officials, but forwarded together by a personal friend, the postmaster at D——. All were the handiwork of the redoubtable Squire Van Buskirk, "Justice of the Peace." These, written to the United States marshal, the district attorney, and the postmaster, set forth that events had recently occurred at Beulah and vicinity which scandalized the good people, and demanded thorough investigation at the hands of the authorities. In the language of the legal luminary who now proposed to unearth the conspiracy against the morals of the neighborhood, "A dandy-lookin' chap rid about the kentry in a bran-new kerridge, pulled by a white hoss, kiverd with a new and most exterevigunt harnis, and he purtendid to be payin' up of money stole from the post offis, and altho' as Justice of the Peace I demanded an explenashun of his extereordinery percedin's, he feloniusly disclined to tel enny thing, only that his name was Merricks or Sherricks, and that he was agint of the genrul post offis. I hiv no hesetashun in pernouncin' him a most dangrus swindlur and blankmaler, and in deenouncin' that as sich he orter be percedid agin promtorily cordin' to the stetu in sich cases made and pvided. And I do afurm that to the best of my nollige and beleef ther's suthin' rong at Stars post offis, and this chap Shetticks was hir'd to kiver it up."

The old gentleman seemed to be very much in earnest in the crusade, for shortly after, other missives from his pen, of similar purport, were forwarded to the special agent through friendly officials, whose positions brought them into some acquaintance with the real facts. He even wrote to the department, "exposin' the operashuns of the pertendid agint," and all the letters finally found their way into the hands of the gentleman whom the watchful conservator of the morals of Beulah was determined to squelch. So far from causing an-

noyance, the epistles were a source of great merriment to the little coterie familiar with the secrets of the case.

Not long after, an opportunity arose for turning the tables on the justice. The special agent happening to be called to D——, was informed by the assistant postmaster that Squire Van Buskirk was in town, stopping at The United States. "Let us go up together, and see if he will recognize me," said the detective.

"Very well," replied the assistant; and they sauntered forth in company.

In the reading-room they found the old gentleman seated in an arm-chair, dozing. His stiff, iron-gray hair was cut very short, after the manner of the pilgrim fathers. A quid of tobacco nestled comfortably in his half-opened mouth, while a nose, shaped like the beak of a hawk, was thrust forward as if to perform the part of a sentinel. At the moment no one happened to be near. Tapping him lightly on the shoulder, the detective remarked, "Squire Van Buskirk, I believe."

The justice wakened with a sudden start, tilted his chair back against the wall, put his hat in his lap, and replied, "Yas, what'll ye hev?"

"About how much are you worth, sir?" inquired the special agent.

"Eh! what! heow much am I wuth. By Cezar, what's that to yeou?"

"This much, Squire Van Buskirk. Official business called me to your place several weeks ago. I was engaged in the performance of my duty, and succeeded in discharging it to the satisfaction of every person interested except yourself. You not only manifested at the time an unwarranted, impertinent, and reprehensible curiosity, but you have since been flooding the country with letters denouncing me as a black-mailer, and otherwise defaming my character. It is my turn now, and I propose to have satisfaction by suing you for summary damages, and I want to know how much you are worth,

so as to fix the amount of my claim. I shall retain able counsel, and proceed with dispatch."

At this unexpected announcement the justice was filled with amazement and terror. "Hold on, hold on!" he exclaimed, each particular hair standing on end; "let's adjesticate this questin Christin-like. I didn't know yeou at fust, but I re kernize yeou neow. Yeou'r the agint that fixed things for Deekun Starr."

"As you now remember me, and also call to mind what you have done in the premises, you understand the reasons for my course. I have in my possession a number of your slanderous letters upon which I propose to base my complaint."

"Let me see 'em," demanded the justice, eagerly.

The letters were produced and exhibited.

"Kin yeou prove the writin'?"

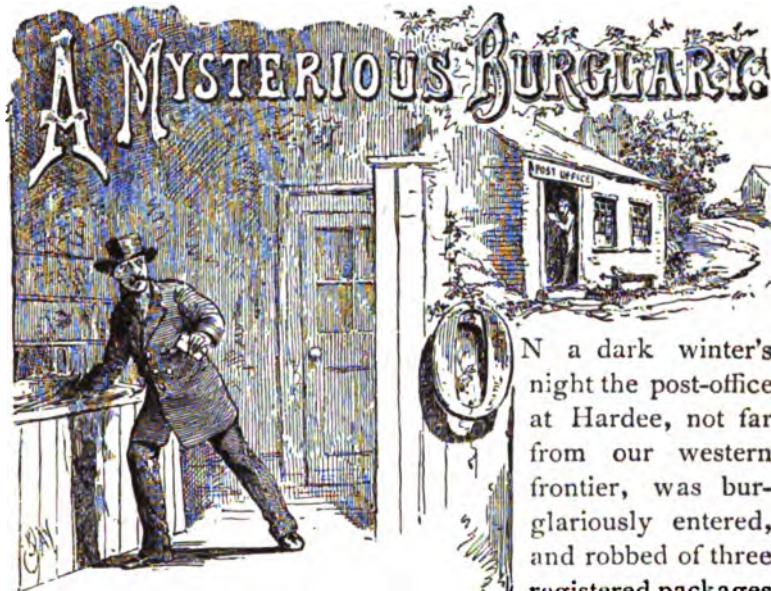
"Yes, squire, I can. Your attempt to throw a doubt on their genuineness may seem cunning to you, but it will avail nothing. Again I ask, how much are you worth? If you decline to answer, I can get the information at Beulah."

At the prospect of impending ruin, the lion of the law and champion of sound morals began to beg for mercy. And he pleaded his cause effectively, for though perverse and obstinate, he was at heart kind and well-meaning. He admitted the authorship of the letters, but urged in extenuation that he was so distracted by the care of a crazy wife that he did not know what he was about. Sometimes he felt as if he was more than half crazy himself. In conclusion he said, "I beg yeour parding. Concedder my troubles and flusteration. For God's sake, don't take what little I hev. I'm nigh on to sixty-four year old, and my work-time is past. If what I hev is took from me, me and my poor crazy wife will both die in the poor-house."

At this the old man broke down completely. The special agent let him agonize a few minutes, believing that the lesson would be a profitable one. Then, taking him by the hand, he

said, "Squire Van Buskirk, I am glad you realize you did wrong in trying to injure an innocent man. You seem to be sincerely sorry. I can assure you I have no desire to harm a hair of your head, and accordingly I shall permit the matter to drop here. But let me urge you to be more careful in future."

The justice was so rejoiced that he was ready to promise anything. By way of crazy apology, he said, at parting, "I thank yeou for not puttin' me to trouble. I kin only say, if I had the thing to do over agin, I wouldn't do it."



Committing the Crime.

N a dark winter's night the post-office at Hardee, not far from our western frontier, was burglariously entered, and robbed of three registered packages containing, in the

aggregate, about one hundred and seventy-five dollars, and of two bundles of ordinary letters. Mr. Albert Parlin, the postmaster, immediately notified John B. Furay, the nearest special agent of the department, who happened at the time to have on hand two very important cases which continued to engross his attention till pushed to successful completion. Six weeks elapsed before it was possible for him to reach the scene of the robbery.

Parlin, the postmaster, had been long and favorably known to the detective. About sixty years old, ingenuous and upright, his integrity had passed into a proverb. To be "as honest as old Pap Parlin" was the highest praise in the vocabulary of the county. He held the office by the divine right of discovery; and the public, as the place filled with settlers, came to regard

him as the ideal postmaster, created expressly for the position, and unfit for anything else.

The burglary drove the poor old man nearly insane, and he felt greatly perplexed and aggrieved that the special agent did not drop all other business to hurry by relays of horses to his rescue. On account of the garrulity of the old gentleman, the detective did not dare to explain the urgency of the work that detained him, and could only give general instructions that every scrap of evidence and information should be carefully treasured up for future use. For the first few days Parlin kept up an incessant bombardment with letters and telegrams; but finding that the fire produced no visible effect on the movements of the special agent, he resolved, in disgust, to conduct



"Midnight conclaves were held, notable for wisdom and gush."

the investigation himself. In pursuance of the new programme, the sheriff of the county, one or two constables, and all the "sharp fellows" of the town, combined to catch the rascal.

Midnight conclaves were held, notable for wisdom and gush. Vain was it for a thief to hope to escape with such an array of talent closing in upon him. Merit soon met its reward. A vagabond was picked up and thrust into jail on the principle that as he was never known to do anything else for a living, he must have done this. The evidence was purely inferential. Though well connected, the fellow had degenerated into a notorious loafer, and was seen hanging around the office about eight o'clock the evening before the burglary. It was understood, moreover, that, earlier in the scale of decline, he had been invited to leave the store of a brother-in-law, a most estimable gentleman, for till-tapping. What more proof was required? The court of Judge Lynch has hanged many a poor wretch on much more slender evidence. In this instance the prisoner was dragged fifty miles or more before a United States commissioner, and, after a hearing of the facts, was discharged, as the prosecution failed to make even a *prima facie* case.

On reaching Hardee, six weeks after the robbery, the detective found that the postmaster and his associates in the investigation had failed to develop, or even to discover, a single clue. From previous statements of Parlin he fully believed that the party already arrested was actually the criminal, and that the local authorities had broken down at the preliminary examination from lack of skill in pursuing the trail. When brought to the rack, however, the fellow proved an *alibi*, though in doing so he was compelled to admit that he passed the night in a manner so scandalous that nothing less than the prospect of a prison could have extorted the confession.

The building occupied as a post-office was of brick, one story high, and about sixteen by forty feet in size. It stood on the north side with the end to the street, which ran east and west, on quite a steep hill-side, the grade rising about ten feet between the front and rear of the structure. The earth had been excavated to make room for the building, so that the soil at the north end fell but little below the eaves. In the west wall, about twenty-five feet from the front, was a window of

two sashes opening upon a vacant lot, the natural surface of which nearly corresponded with the top of the lower sash. It was protected from the falling earth by a little circular brick wall, the foundation of which rested on the level of the sill. Though unsightly in appearance, it had evidently been cut to give a draught in summer, and was so constructed that the under sash remained immovable, while the upper one could be lowered and raised at pleasure, being held in place by a stick of the proper length set under one corner inside. When the support was taken away, the sash dropped by its own weight. It could not be disturbed from without except by first breaking the glass.

On the evening before the robbery Parlin made up the mails for the several routes centering at Hardee, all of which were to start early the next morning. It included the issues of two weekly papers published in the village, and sent to the office mostly in single wrappers. The building had once been used as a book-store, and the shelves on the west wall still remained in place. It was the custom of the postmaster to place the mails for each route on the shelves in separate piles, and, the evenings before they were to leave, to conceal outgoing registers under the piles to which they respectively belonged. For this practice he gave two reasons: first, he was then sure not to forget the packages, or send them in the wrong direction; and, second, if any one did break in for purposes of plunder, the thief would not be likely to look for valuables in a place apparently so exposed yet really so secure. Ordinary letters were tied up in bundles and laid on top of the newspapers. By nature and habit the postmaster was exceedingly precise in all his methods, uniformly pursuing one settled routine.

Registered letters for local delivery were kept in the cash drawer under the wicket. Before leaving for the night, it was his invariable custom to count the funds on hand, and to take home everything except nickels, mutilated currency, and a few silver coins that had gradually accumulated. On the evening in question there was no departure from the ordinary course.

The value of the odds and ends left locked up in the drawer amounted to about six dollars in money and ten dollars more in postage stamps.

No assistant was employed in the office except a daughter of the postmaster, about seventeen years of age,—the two attending exclusively both to the postal work and to the news-stand. The regulation forbidding admittance to outsiders was enforced with great strictness, the postal code being revered by "Pap Parlin" second only to the Bible. Business in this establishment ran with the precision of clock-work.

The night of the robbery he locked the door about half past nine o'clock, as usual, to go home. On returning the next morning a little before daybreak, he first noticed that the upper sash of the west window was down, a stiff, raw breeze pouring in through the aperture; and on striking a light, further evidences of the late visitation became painfully apparent. The cash drawer, pried from its fastenings with a small axe, lay upon the table, but the contents had not been taken, though a portion of the stamps were scattered about the floor. Of the coin, nickels, and mutilated currency, not a cent was missing, the exactness of the postmaster enabling him to decide upon this point without hesitation. The bundles of letters placed on the shelves were gone as well as the registers, but the papers were undisturbed.

Upon examining the window, he found that a couple of small bottles, left standing on the sill, had been removed, but otherwise the dust on the inner surface had not been disturbed, except in one spot where it betrayed the toe-mark of a large, coarse boot. The glass in the lower corner of the upper sash just above the support was fractured. A slight snow-fall partially covered the ground, but it was not deep enough to give a perfect impression of the boot. With characteristic precision the old gentleman had preserved every thing material, and, so far as appearances were concerned, had taken minute and exact observations, so that, although six weeks had elapsed, the officer could hardly

have been better equipped for the investigation had he arrived at Hardee the next morning.

When asked if any one besides the daughter knew where the registers were kept, the postmaster replied that he was sure no one but himself was acquainted with the place of concealment. Ordinarily they were left in the cash drawer, and it was only on evenings preceding "mail days" that they were taken out and hidden under the papers. The daughter left before him, and he was uniformly alone when the transfer was made. This statement was verified by the young lady herself.

"How, then, did the fellow whom you arrested find it out?" inquired the officer.

"I suppose," answered Parlin, "that the rascal hung around the front window near the west wall, and I must have left the inner door ajar, so that he contrived to peek through and discover the secret. I can't explain the matter in any other way, though I am very careful at such times to keep the door closed. You can infer how particular I have been in guarding the secret from the fact that I never told my daughter, in whom I have the utmost confidence."

Considerably perplexed but not disheartened, the detective returned to the hotel, had a fire kindled in his room, pulled off his boots and coat, and began to study the facts. A great crime had been committed. The local authorities had exhausted the resources of their ingenuity to discover the criminal without avail. At the same time the public credited him with the possession of some supernatural gift by virtue of which he was expected to succeed where others had failed. Little does the outside world appreciate the anxiety, the heart-ache, and the intense mental strain experienced by a faithful officer whose soul is in his work, on occasions like these. Thoughts, theories, intuitions stream in upon him involuntarily, till the absorption becomes so complete that appetite and sleep are often banished for days. Under the pressure the perceptions become preternaturally acute,

so that he is sometimes conscious for brief intervals of a power of insight far surpassing the ordinary range. Especially do external facts pilot him back through the plans and motives, the contrivings and apprehensions of the guilty mind that left these marks to betray its workings.

All the sharp men of the village had been hunting as it were for an object lost in the dark. That it was gone they well knew, but when, where, or how to look for it was the question which had been discussed till the theme was worn threadbare. Through some supersensual vision the detective was popularly supposed to be provided with a lantern to assist in the search.

One peculiarity of the robbery struck him with great force. Why did not the thief, having the opportunity, appropriate the money and stamps in the cash drawer? This was the first clue, and the reader will see how skillfully it was pursued.

The detective returned to the post-office for a re-examination of the window, and soon discovered what he believed to be another important point. Having carefully replaced the fragments of the broken glass, he soon decided that the fracture was made by a blow from some sharp or pointed heavy instrument, delivered with a short, quick, rebounding tap from the *inside*, which simply shivered the glass without displacing any of it. Would a pane of glass thus broken actually show upon which side the instrument impinged? The discovery, if real, could easily be verified by experiment.

Going to a blacksmith's shop, the detective procured a small chunk of scrap-iron, and proceeding thence to a lumber-yard, bought a glazed sash, which he took to a retired gulch beyond the outskirts of the village, where he could prosecute philosophical inquiries without fear of annoyance or interruption. Experiment fully sustained the theory formed on inspecting the window at the post-office. Before the sash was exhausted, he could in every instance, from the appearance of the fracture, tell from which direction the

blow came. Where a pane of well-glazed glass is struck quickly with any instrument presenting but a small point of contact, the surface that receives the blow will be pulverized and look white, while the opposite surface will chip off, the fragments flying away from the point of force, and leaving usually a cone-shaped space behind. The characteristics are unmistakable.

These experiments demonstrated that the window at the



"Before the sash was exhausted, he could in every instance, from the appearance of the fracture, tell from which direction the blow came."

post-office could only have been broken from the inside. Again the detective returned to the office prepared to subject the fragments of glass to still closer scrutiny. The manner in which the piece found upon the floor was chipped in one place along the inner edge, indicated that it had been first pushed out and then back again. The upper fragment found in the walled recess was probably driven thither by the force of the original blow. The

under piece could then be removed by gently working it backward and forward from either side, to suit the convenience of the operator.

The removal of the registers without disarranging the superincumbent papers showed that the burglar knew exactly where to look for them. Why was the cash drawer pried open? Manifestly because the thief was aware that valuable packages were ordinarily kept there. Why did he not take the money and stamps, for plunder was the only object of the visit, and burglars do not often discard property in so portable and current a form? Obviously he is some friend of Parlin, sufficiently versed in the regulations of the department to know that the postmaster is not pecuniarily responsible for the contents of letters stolen from his custody, whether registered or ordinary, but that he is responsible for stamps and for the proceeds of their sale. The burglar aimed to so regulate the affair as to rob individuals outside without damaging the pocket of Parlin. Yes, he must be a friend, and a very close friend too, who has had familiar access to the office, and who in preparation for the raid contrived in some way to break the glass while on the inside. Perhaps he had a false key to the door, in which case he must have smashed the window and escaped that way as a blind.

At this stage of the investigation, the facts seemed to bear heavily against the old man himself. On the other hand, a pure and exemplary life, hitherto untarnished by the slightest imputation of dishonesty, entitled him to a generous measure of confidence. Besides, persons of exact, methodical habits, whose thoughts and actions run in the grooves of routine, are the last on earth to step outside the familiar ruts for the purpose of committing crime. Such characters not only keep out of the way of temptation, but even when the foundations of virtue are sapped by insidious influences, yield very slowly and only after long resistance.

Guided by the clues already in hand, the detective proceeded to make indirect, cautious inquiries in reference to the family and intimate associates of the postmaster. Besides the daughter employed in the office, he had two grown sons, one of whom migrated from the county a long time before, and had not for many months gladdened the home-stead with his presence; and another, then residing a short distance beyond the limits of the town, who enjoyed the reputation of having been a wild, dare-devil sort of a boy, but who, on marrying a couple of years before, "had settled down into a pretty fair man, though awful poor," as a villager put the case. He had no continuous occupation, but did odd jobs as he could find employment, laboring just about enough to keep actual starvation from the door. Once he acted as clerk in the post-office, but having incurred the displeasure of his father at the time of his marriage, he lost the position permanently. Occasionally, however, "the old man still helped Josh a little," notwithstanding the previous quarrel.

The detective also learned that, two or three weeks prior to the robbery, the wife of Joshua Parlin, in talking over family affairs, wept bitterly at the poverty which excluded her from the enjoyment of the barest comforts of existence. Since then, in conversation with the same party, no reference whatever had been made to the subject. Wishing to push this line of inquiry still further, he gave his informant, the wife of an honest blacksmith and a perambulating gazette of local intelligence, a ten-dollar note, with instructions to call on the family of young Parlin, and to report what evidences she could observe of recent purchases. No time was lost in the execution of the errand. Within an hour the "gazette" returned, crammed with news enough for four editions and an extra. Before removing her bonnet, or taking a seat, she "let her tongue loose," and hardly paused for breath till her stock of discoveries was exhausted. "Why, la sakes alive, I should think I did see something! She's got

a bran new dress,—a nice one it is, too,—and a new hat, and a new clothes-wringer, and a new baby-crib, don't you think ; and, laws of mercy ! a whole bolt of bleached muslin lying on the bureau. She says they have been down to her uncle's and cousin's, in Washington County, and that the wagon broke near Jericho, where they had a dreadful time,



"Before removing her bonnet, or taking a seat, she 'let her tongue loose,' and hardly paused for breath till her stock of discoveries was exhausted."

and had to stay all night. Her uncle gave them a cow which they left till spring on the farm of a cousin." And thus the messenger ran on like the singer of Horace that, once started, could not be stopped.

Finally the schedule of items reached an end, when the officer interposed.

"Madam, you have done well. My most sanguine expectations are more than fulfilled. Now I swear you solemnly, by the great stick of Moses, never to mention this matter to a living soul as long as you live. At this time especially an indiscreet word might frustrate all my plans."

"La," replied the gazette, "trust me for that. I reckon I know how to keep *my* mouth shut."

In less than an hour the detective was on the road to Washington County, thirty-five miles distant. At Jericho, four miles below, he too had business at the blacksmith's shop, and learned that, two or three weeks before, Joshua Parlin had paid four dollars and a half for a new axle. At the store across the way he had also purchased arctic overshoes for himself and wife, at two dollars and a quarter a pair, and a hat for three dollars, making a total expenditure here of twelve dollars.

He pushed on till midnight, and starting again before daylight, took breakfast at the house where the Parlins lodged on the way down. Here eliciting the information that the travelers had made a detour by Olivet, "to git a few fixins from the store," as the farmer expressed it, he followed over the same route, tracing a cash expenditure of twenty-seven dollars and sixty cents more. Thence he drove to the house of the cousin who was keeping the cow, and, examining the herd in the rôle of a cattle-buyer, found that he was wintering two cows instead of one, for a "cousin in Hardee, who bought them while on a visit below." Below he accordingly hurried, and before night learned that the animals were bought for twenty-five and thirty dollars respectively, and were paid for in cash.

Well satisfied with the results of the trip, the officer returned to Hardee, to learn that "Josh" was absent from home, and would not return till the following day. Not wishing to meet any one whom he had seen in Washington County, as the object of the late journey might thus be prematurely exposed,

he drove out twenty miles in the opposite direction, on other post-office business, and returned early the next afternoon. Before night he learned that, since the robbery, young Parlin had actually expended in the village ten dollars for corn, nine dollars for the wringer, eight dollars for a clock, and eight dollars for the crib, besides making two final payments of five dollars each on a sewing-machine. The money traced directly out of his hands during the period reached one hundred and thirty-nine dollars and sixty cents, with a strong presumption that he had spent other small sums which, from the nature of the case, could not easily be tracked.

Meanwhile the postmaster was greatly disturbed at the supposed inaction of the detective, and did not hesitate to express his disappointment and disgust quite freely to the patrons of the office. The feeling of despondency was not shared by the gentleman whose efforts had failed to satisfy the old man. He had succeeded in picking up many important facts; and although the information was not yet in shape to pass current in a court of justice as legal evidence, it was like gold dust, very precious in itself, and, in the hands of a skillful workman, easily coined into a legal tender that no judge or jury would refuse.

For three days and two nights the detective had scarcely taken time to eat or to sleep, having driven in a buggy about one hundred and sixty miles, stopping only long enough at different points to gather the facts essential to the successful development of his plans. It was now Saturday evening, and the hour had come for forcing matters to a crisis.

Shortly after dark he went to the post-office, and taking aside the poor old man who had never done any one a willful wrong, he said to him,—

"Well, Pap Parlin, I am sorry to hear that you have lost faith in me. There are few men whom I hold in higher regard than I do you, and one is naturally pained to part with the approval of the good. Yesterday and to-day you have said several hard things about me; but this I shall not resent.

I have not been idle, or 'mysterious to no good purpose,' as you may think, and as you rather unadvisedly have said. Where I have been, and what I have done, perhaps you will never know. But now, and right here, I mean business. Believing you to be a man of truth, I ask you to tell me how much money—not provisions or clothing, but money—you have given your son Joshua since the occurrence of the robbery."

Not quick of perception at best, and somewhat dazed by this sudden and unexpected attack on the flank, the old gentleman barely saw that the shot was aimed either at himself or at Joshua, but could not decide which. Too conscientious to prevaricate, and too confused to comprehend the object of the trap, he replied,—

"Well, Furay, I don't know what you are trying to get at; but I'll tell you as near as I can remember. I gave him at one time—let me see—three dollars; at another, two dollars. Once I gave his wife two dollars. O, since then I may have let both together have eight, ten, or possibly twelve dollars; but, all told, I don't think it would exceed ten."

"Now, Mr. Parlin, state what other means, if any within your knowledge, Joshua has of obtaining money."

A light broke upon the old man, the first ray that for him had ever glimmered upon a mystery hitherto inscrutable. Almost swooning under the blow, he exclaimed pathetically,—

"My God, Furay, you don't think that?"

"No matter, Mr. Parlin. Do not stop to speculate on any conjectures of mine. Please state exactly what you know."

"To be candid," answered the postmaster, "so far as I can judge, he has earned but little since then, and his total income could not exceed a very few dollars. Now, for God's sake, my dear friend, tell me what you mean."

"Mr. Parlin, excuse me for the present for not complying with that request. I have a favor to ask in which we are both interested. You must remain at the office to-night till I return, be it early or late. Do not move a step till I come. If I

bring any one with me, you may know that that man is the burglar."

Provided with a pair of handcuffs and a revolver,—for Joshua was reputed to be desperate and dangerous when excited,—the officer started for his house. The earth was covered to the depth of a foot with untrodden snow; and as the storm passed off, the weather turned intensely cold. With overcoat buttoned to chin, he felt rather too much cumbered to meet the possible attack of a desperado; but there was no alternative, and so off he posted alone, reaching the cottage about nine o'clock. The lights were extinguished, and the family in bed. Knocking not too obtrusively, he soon heard a stir within, then the patter of bare feet across the room, followed by the withdrawal of the bolt. Peering through the small aperture made by the partial opening of the door, the party thus aroused inquired, in a gruff voice,—

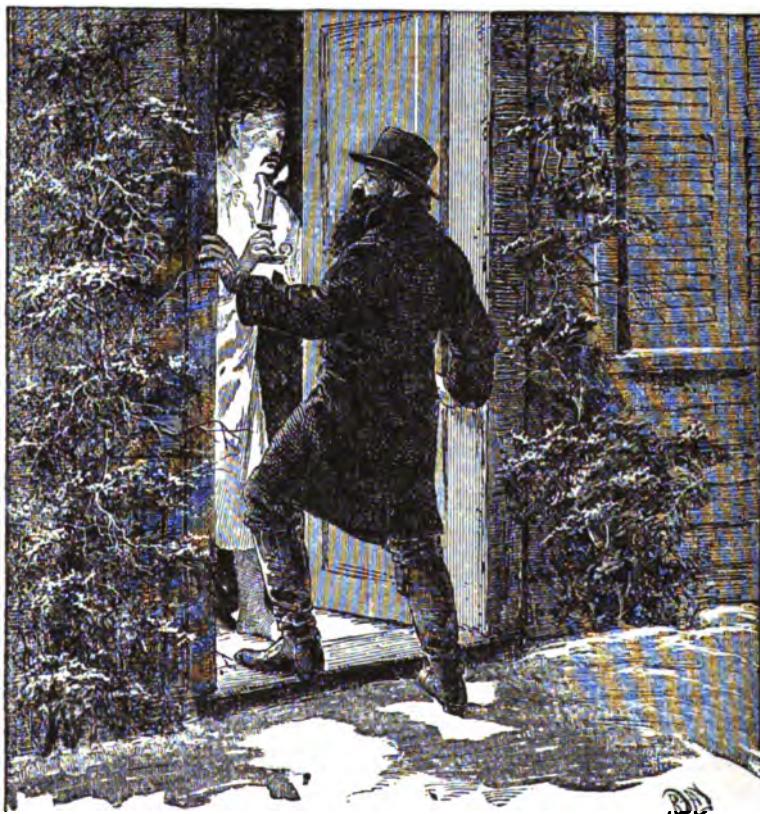
"Who's there?"

"It is I," replied the muffled stranger, bolting in without ceremony, "John B. Furay, special agent of the post-office department. You have heard of me, and know what I have come for. Put on your clothes, and go with me. Quick! Not a minute to lose!"

As the name was announced, the wife, in bed in the next room, as if inspired by uncontrollable terror, raised a deathly scream that filled the house with its clangor, and seemed to ring far out into the gloom of the night. The noise wakened the baby thirteen months old, which added a lusty treble to the chorus. There stood the intruder, enveloped in pitchy darkness, and half appalled by the tragic notes of the concert. Joshua was too much unnerved by the unexpected visit to contrive, if so disposed, any measures of defense. In a few seconds, so quick were her movements, the wife came out partially dressed, with a candle in her hand. The officer then accompanied Josh into the sleeping-room, and stood by while he dressed, not wishing to have the business, sad enough at best, interrupted by nonsense or needless ecce-

tricities, which, if permitted to develop, might take an unpleasant turn.

The scene that ensued when the unbidden guest was about to depart, with the head of the household in custody, cannot be described. Throwing her arms about the neck of her hus-



"Put on your clothes, and go with me! Quick! Not a minute to lose!"

band, the wife cried, the husband cried, the baby cried, the detective cried, while the child soon to be born intensified the pathos of the situation a hundred-fold. War, famine, or pestilence could produce nothing more heart-rending.

The fact may not generally be known, but in moments of

intense excitement a sudden change from great cold to the heat of a warm room will take the life, the virility, the magnetic courage out of a man as quickly as boiling water will destroy the dignity of a starched collar. This was what happened to the officer, the extreme difference between the temperature without and within completely unnerving him. Perspiration streamed from every pore, standing in large beads upon his forehead, and the strength of a giant turned to the weakness of a child.

The array of facts already discovered, all pointing in the same direction, fully convinced the detective that Joshua Parlin was the burglar. By the dim light of the candle he saw that the wife also knew that the husband was guilty, her apprehensions finding expression in every movement and look. Probably the pair had often discussed the possibilities of discovery. More conscientious, and predisposed by the religious tendencies of the female mind to believe that retribution will surely overtake crime, the poor woman had evidently lived in constant fear of the explosion that sooner or later was to shiver the peace of the household. The name "Furay," heard often in the lonely cottage, had become invested with strange terrors. Now the dread magician whose phantom had haunted her thoughts by day and her dreams by night, actually stood there, a grim fate, preordained, from which escape was impossible.

The manner of the couple was the more significant from the fact that the object of the visit had not been disclosed. Nothing had been said about an arrest, nor had an allusion even been made to the commission of a crime; yet the actions of both presupposed a guilty knowledge of the facts. The detective felt that by a bold push he could extort a confession from the wife without resistance; but under any circumstances his generous nature would recoil from taking advantage of the weakness of woman when a man stood by more deeply involved in the wrong, while in the present instance the condition of her health required that she should be spared all unnecessary

agitation. He was now especially desirous to get away from a place where the bare introduction of himself by name had produced such terror.

Opening the outer door, the officer said, "Come, it is growing late ; we must be off."

Again clasping her husband about the neck, the wife exclaimed, "O, Josh, I shall never, n-e-v-e-r see you again ; O, I know I shall not !"

"Mrs. Parlin, you shall see him again to-night," replied the officer, whose self-possession was now fully restored by the cold.

The two men started in the direction of the post-office, and, after walking a few minutes in silence, the special agent remarked, sadly, "Well, my poor fellow, my duties, as you see, are sometimes terribly painful, but what on earth tempted you to draw down this calamity upon the heads of yourself and of your little family ?"

With considerable coolness he answered, "I am sure I don't know what all this means, and I wish you'd tell me."

"Joshua, it is too late to attempt to play the game of pretended ignorance or innocence. I have been at work on your case, and happily have succeeded in unraveling the facts. You foolishly thought no one would ever find it out ; but I have tracked you, step by step, and now know all. When you resolved to sell yourself, body and soul, to Satan, couldn't you find some other person to rob besides your poor old gray-headed father ?"

"I didn't rob my father. What do you mean by talking in this way ?"

"Sit down on this log, Josh, and we will see," pointing to a black mass by the roadside, from which the wind had driven the snow. Both sat down, when the officer continued, "How much of that money have you left? Now do not lie to me."

"What money?" answered he, with an air of assumed indignation.

"Ah, you miserable rascal, do you suppose I came here

this cold night for sport? What have you been buying property with latterly?"

"What property?" sneeringly.

"Certainly, Josh, you must take me for an idiot."

"I've bought no property. What do you mean?"

"Do you dare tell me you have acquired no property since you robbed your father's post-office?"

"Well, no, not exactly. My wife's uncle gave her a cow."

"Who has given you money since then?"

"My father has given me some."

"How much?"

"I don't exactly know."

"Well, then, about how much?"

"Not a great deal."

"No, of course not. I've seen your good, honest father, and know all about that. You are certain, then, you have bought nothing since that event?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"You didn't buy a baby-crib, did you?"

"Yes," hesitatingly.

"You didn't go down to Washington County a few weeks ago, and, breaking the wagon near Jericho, pay four dollars and a half for repairs?"

"Y-e-s."

"And buy two pairs of overshoes, and a hat, paying for them in money?"

"Y-e-s," very slowly.

"Well, sir, what else have you bought since then?"

"Not another thing, as sure as I live."

"Be careful, Josh, very careful. Before speaking so positively, it may be well to refresh your memory."

"That's all. I know it."

"Where did you get the money?"

"I borrowed it from a fellow that used to live over in Missouri."

"How much did he let you have?"

"Twenty-five dollars."

"Well, Josh, I'll not trouble you to invent a name for your very accommodating friend from Missouri. Did you buy anything at Olivet?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"You are sure on that point?"

"Yes, I am."

"Tell me about the cow."

"My wife's uncle made her a present of that."

"Why didn't you bring her home?"

Both parties in the dialogue were growing very cold, and the battle threatened to turn on their respective powers of endurance.

"I had no place to put her in," answered the burglar, with a shiver.

"No? Well, that's all you bought?"

"I didn't buy her."

"You do not understand me, Josh. Let me state the case again. You mean to say that all the articles you purchased have been enumerated, and that you paid for them out of the twenty-five dollars borrowed from your friend in Missouri?"

"Yes, sir, that is just exactly what I mean; and I don't see why I am put to all this trouble."

"Never mind, Joshua Parlin, I promise you shall be abundantly satisfied on that point, further on. Knowledge, information, facts are a good thing to have, Josh, as I will show you in due time. You have heard of me before?"

"Yes, sir."

"What have you heard of me?"

"Father scolded because you didn't come down and look into the burglary. He thought you could find out who broke into the office. He kept wishing that you would hurry up and catch the fellow."

"That was real kind in your father. Now, Josh, come down to dots, and tell me what you wished."

"I don't know as I had much thought about it."

"No?"

—"No, I didn't."

The winds shrieked through the naked tree-tops, and the darkness threw a friendly screen over the features of the robber. How the officer wished for a few moments of daylight, that he might look down into those false eyes, and force the surrender of the well-guarded secret. But the masked battery must be carried, even by the light of the frosty stars. "Joshua," he continued, "I wonder if all men who steal are also atrocious liars. What do you think about it?"

"I never thought much about it."

"Well, there is where we differ, Josh. I have, and am prepared to express an opinion. You are a thief. You robbed the post-office — robbed your good, honest father, whose soul is as free from guile as that of the infant in the cradle. It overwhelms me with amazement that, with the whole world before you, you should begin on him. Yes, Josh, you are a thief. You know it, and I know it. What we two know so well in common we can certainly talk about. Up to this time you have uttered nothing but falsehoods. Now I am going to show you how unavailing is the refuge of lies, how great crimes leave footprints at every step. Where did you get the money to pay Treadwell, the store-keeper at Olivet, twenty-seven dollars and sixty cents in cash? Where did you get it, I ask? Come, talk fast."

"I can explain that," answered the accused, hesitatingly, "but I am getting cold;" and his teeth chattered.

"Never mind the cold. I am used to it. I can stand it all night. To follow up that fatal trip to Washington County, why did you lie about the cow? Why didn't you report truly that, instead of receiving a present of one, you bought two of Timothy R. Davis, paying therefor fifty-five dollars in money? Shall I go on and tell all? I know you are cold out here, but I want the truth from you, and the truth I shall have. Do you think there is any escape from the penalties of sin? Can you break away from the network of facts which I have happily been instrumental in bringing to light?"

"Let's go to a fire somewhere," answered Joshua, despondently, "for I am almost frozen."

"Fire has no charms for me now," replied the detective. "I have borne my suffering during the past week, riding day and night in the terrible cold, without sleep or rest, pursuing your tracks through Washington County. Such is the trouble you have put me to; and now, do you complain about a little cold? As I said before, we both know all about this matter, and the sooner you speak candidly the better it will be for you. How much of that money have you still left? and is it in your hands, or in the hands of your wife? You must see, by this time, what supreme folly it is to try to keep up this sham longer."

"Yes, I'll con — con — fess, it does look pretty rough on me. Let's go to a fire, and I'll tell you all about it, and I'll tell the truth."

Had there been a place whither the officer could have taken the burglar alone, he would have started instantly; but there was none, and as yet he had only approached the "ragged edge"—very near, it is true, but not so near as to commit himself irretrievably. Hence he answered, decisively, "No, you don't go to a fire till you speak the truth. How much of that money have you left?"

It will be observed that the detective scrupulously avoided asking the offender directly if he committed the crime. Such a course would have conceded too much, implying an admission of weakness where it was important to appear impregnable. The questions all assumed that Joshua was guilty, but touched the vital point obliquely.

After a brief hesitation, the poor fellow, shivering with cold and fear, stammered out, "I see it is no use, Mr. Furay, to try to hide it. I will tell the truth. I don't think there's more than ten dollars left."

"Now, Joshua, you begin to act like a man. Which of you has the money?"

"My wife has it, with the exception of a dollar or two."

The long struggle was over. "Now we will go to the post-office," said the special agent, "where your father is waiting for us."

It was nearly midnight when the two men entered the building, the daughter, who refused to leave her father in this trying emergency, opening the door to admit them. Without a word she followed to the room in the rear, where a light stood upon the table. The old man, whose hair was as white as the freshly fallen snow that mantled the fields, sat motionless, his face wearing a ghastly expression of anguish and despair. For a moment no one broke the awful silence. The special agent was the first to speak. In a tone which indicated how deeply the unhappy family shared his sympathies, he said, sorrowfully, "Mr. Parlin, we are here."

The father arose with apparent effort, and walked away in silence, when the officer motioned the son to a vacant chair, into which he dropped helplessly. After taking two or three turns up and down the room, the venerable form of Albert Parlin bent over the bowed head of his child, and, scarcely able to articulate, he asked, "Joshua, my son, can you look at me and tell me you are innocent of this great crime?"

The son neither raised his eyes, nor uttered a syllable. In that pause the grief-stricken parent read the whole story of the temptation and fall. Turning away, he walked down the aisle behind the boxes, wringing his hands and sobbing, "O, O, my God, my God! what have I done to deserve this affliction?"

The daughter ran after him, and, throwing her arms about his neck, exclaimed, between kisses and tears, "Why, father, dear father, he has not said he is guilty!"

He folded the girl in his arms, as if in the ruin one precious treasure was still left, and, looking down into her upturned eyes with tender confidence, replied, "O, Dord dear, he is, he is! If he was innocent, he'd have said so."

Quick as a gazelle she sprang away, and, rushing down the length of the room, threw herself upon the neck of her

brother, her pallid face streaming with tears, and, covering him with kisses, ejaculated imploringly, "My darling brother, you did not do it, you did not do it, did you? O, no; you could not, you could not,—I know you could not!"

To this heart-rending appeal Joshua made no reply, but, dropping his head upon his hands, began to weep. Partially recovering after a short interval, he said, "Father, I want to see you a moment."



"Quick as a gazelle she sprang away, and, rushing down the length of the room, threw herself upon the neck of her brother."

At this point, however, the special agent felt called upon to interfere, though with great reluctance, as he realized that under ordinary circumstances it would be pre-eminently proper for the penitent son to go out alone with the outraged parent, and, with none but God present, to fall upon his knees and implore forgiveness. But the case was not yet in a shape to render such a concession allowable. Accordingly he said,

"Gentlemen, I regret that my duty compels me to object to any private interviews between you. A moment's reflection will show you that I cannot rightfully permit it. The conversation must be carried on in my presence, but you can talk freely."

The youth choked, cleared his throat, and for the first time looking up, began tremulously, "It's no use for me to deny it. I've told Mr. Furay, and now, father, I must tell you. It almost kills me to think how wicked I am, how unworthy of you and Dord. I am guilty. O, what cruel fiend possessed me!"

The sorrowful group gathered more closely about the fire, when, partly of his own volition and partly in reply to various questions, he told the whole story of the burglary. On the afternoon preceding the crime, he happened to be left in the office a few minutes alone. Moody over the penury that hung like a nightmare upon his little family, he gave way to a mad impulse which had since cost a thousand unavailing regrets. Seizing a tumbler, he wound a coarse towel around it, and struck the window a sharp blow. A small piece was pushed outward so that its edge could be grasped from the external walled recess. A sheet of pasteboard was then placed over the fracture to conceal the mischief. This preliminary work was done in the daytime for fear that the sound of breaking glass in the night might attract attention and lead to discovery.

Late in the evening he returned through the deserted and silent street to complete the job. It was the work of a moment to remove the shattered fragments of glass and to lower the upper sash. Although the postmaster was not aware of it, Joshua had stealthily watched his movements, and knew just where to look for valuable packages. He pried open the cash drawer only to find that it held no registers. Creeping along in the dark to the piles of newspapers on the side-shelves, he ran his hand underneath and discovered three. Seizing these and several packages of ordinary letters, he

made his exit through the window, and hurried home, a stranger thenceforth to happiness.

After a restless night, Joshua rose early, and having kindled a fire, sat down by the kitchen-stove to examine the booty. The letters were tossed into the flames as fast as opened, very few except the registers containing anything of value.

The secret of the newly-gotten wealth the burglar found it impossible to keep. Beset by his wife to tell where he obtained so much money, he finally admitted to her the robbery. From that hour peace was banished from their habitation, the poor woman, shocked and terrified, looking forward to speedy retribution as inevitable. Often the wife awoke from troubled dreams to discuss with the husband the chances of detection, always expressing a firm belief that the Lord would not permit such an act to remain hidden, but would aid the "mail agent" to find it out. When the officer, clad in her imagination with the attributes of the Avenger, did really appear, the long dreaded visit, as previously described, drove the poor woman to the verge of distraction.

The father and daughter listened in silent agony to the recital, the grief of the young woman having become too deep even for tears. Joshua Parlin, after the ice was fairly broken, seemed to find relief in the fullness of his confession. Occasionally the special agent interpolated a question with the view of throwing additional light upon some obscure point in the narrative, but the deathlike stillness was broken by few interruptions.

Nothing burns with a fiercer flame than a guilty secret in the bosom of a novice in crime. The hunger for partnership in the fatal knowledge is so intense that not infrequently the burdened spirit voluntarily communicates the truth to some trusted friend, hoping to lighten the load by dividing it. So Joshua Parlin was not satisfied till the little group knew all that he knew about this dark and torturesome affair.

It was very late when the story of the burglar came to an end. The special agent had promised Mrs. Parlin that she should see her husband again that night, and back they accordingly trudged through the snow. The parting between them was very painful. Said the detective to her, as the two men were about to leave the second time, "I promise to do all in my power to have your husband restored to you as soon as it can be done under the law. If at any time during his absence you are threatened with want, let me know, and my purse shall be freely open to you."

Both promises were faithfully kept. The same night the special agent left Hardee with the prisoner, who the next day was lodged in jail in a distant part of the state, a confessed felon.

Albert Parlin refunded all the stolen money, and, when the trial came on, refused to employ counsel to defend the son who had dishonored the name, leaving the conduct of the case entirely to the discretion of the special agent. After the jury had been called, and the penitent had entered a plea of guilty, Mr. Furay arose and made an earnest appeal to the court in behalf of clemency. The judge, out of the fullness of his heart, did what he had never done before in the case of a party convicted of robbing the mails, gave the minimum sentence allowed by the law — one year in the penitentiary.

Having served out his term, the prisoner returned home, and has since led an honest, industrious, and reputable life. The entire family are devoted in their attachment to John B. Furay, knowing that he tempered justice with mercy, and aimed to make the burden bear as lightly upon them as the dignity of the broken law would permit.

It is a somewhat singular fact that honorable and truthful officers almost invariably win the sympathies and lasting goodwill of the prisoners whom they arrest, unless these are hardened, soulless criminals whose better natures are deadened by vice. While all men should be dealt with truthfully, there

is no reason why the penitent thief should not also be treated kindly. Let the poor wretch feel that he is not friendless or forsaken, that, through pure aims and virtuous deeds, the path is still open to the favor of man and to the blessing of God.

“Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.”

The Patriots of '67.



THE JUDGE.

N the early days of reconstruction, after a ride of four hundred miles, the cars left a special agent of the post-office department about midnight at a village of two or three thousand inhabitants in the heart of Alabama. The rain came down in sheets. Guided by a dingy lantern suspended in the vestibule, he made his way to the nearest hotel, which stood a few feet from the railroad track. Southern hotels at that period, more especially away from the leading centers of trade, were the standing horror of the unfortunate itinerants who were compelled by the exigencies of business to depend on their cheer. First-class in extortions, and so poor in everything else as to belong to no class whatever, recognized in the nomenclature of travelers, they were patronized by the self-regardful only from necessity. The unhappy mortals whose pursuits kept

them constantly on the wing gradually settled down to an acceptance of discomfort and bad fare with the stolidity which, under a beneficent law of nature, comes to deaden the sensibilities by habitual contact with remediless ills. As the country recovered from the desolations of war, the hotels improved also, so that the hardships referred to are no longer experienced.



"An African with a tallow dip led the way to the sleeping-apartment."

An African with a tallow dip led the way to the sleeping-apartment. It was located in front, and was apparently the choice room of the establishment. Several broken windowpanes admitted the driving rain and wintery winds, the water standing in broad pools on the naked floor. It was a cold night, and the bed was very thin. Having planted the chair which held his clothing in the center of a miniature lake to protect it from invasion, the guest resigned

himself to such sleep as the hardness of the couch would permit.

About the middle of the next forenoon the storm abated, and he sallied forth in search of the party whose communications to the department had sent him thither. The gravamen of the charge was that the postmaster, a lady, was guilty of prying into the correspondence of the complainant, delaying and suppressing it. He urged the postmaster-general to dispatch an agent from Washington at once to investigate the trouble, and promised to make startling disclosures on his arrival. According to the letter of complaint, the terrible little woman who presided over the mail-bags had put a virtual embargo on communications between the writer and the outside world. The court was in session, and the person aggrieved was one of the lawyers in attendance.

On reaching the venerable rattle-trap where justice or injustice was dispensed, the officer asked the bailiff to request Mr. Periwinkle to step to the door. That gentleman proved to be a white-headed old man of perhaps sixty, with a protuberant mouth, a prominent but thin nose of the Roman profile, and an expression of countenance that blended the characteristics of the fox and the ape.

Said the stranger, "Good morning, judge" (in Alabama every lawyer in colloquial intercourse is called "judge," while the rest of mankind, except generals, are embraced under the generic title of "colonel"). "I have the letter addressed by you to the postmaster-general, and have come to investigate the charges."

The "judge" cleared his throat several times, and was evidently much embarrassed. The prompt notice taken of his complaint appeared to surprise him. He commenced by enumerating the various dignities conferred upon him in times past through the suffrages of his fellow-citizens, and the positions he then filled under the patronage of the Federal power. His patriotism knew no bounds. Wherever

there was an office of emolument or trust to be disposed of, he stood ready like a veteran soldier to rush into the breach, regardless alike of the sneers and jeers of the "enemies of the government." He believed in everybody connected with the administration and Congress, and in everything which they did. At the same time he was ready to incur any sacrifice in the way of accepting office.

After a while the stranger interrupted the stream of his volubility with the remark, "Well, judge, I have come to inquire into your grievances. Please give an explicit statement of the facts."

"Have you been to the post-office?" he inquired.

"Not yet," said the agent. "Before calling on an official against whom serious charges are preferred in general terms, I deem it a duty to myself and to the department to obtain exact information in regard to the nature of the offense."

Again the old gentleman cleared his throat, and, with eyes cast vacantly on the floor, devoted a brief interval to silent meditation.

Rousing from the reverie, he continued, "You will do me a great favor, placing me under lasting obligations, if you will leave town without letting the postmaster know you have been here, or informing any one else of your business. It is true I have had reasons for complaint, but she is on the whole quite an estimable woman, and has influential friends. Besides, a disturbance just now would stir up bad blood and make unpleasantness. I am very glad you came. Tell the postmaster-general, and the secretary of the treasury, and the attorney-general, and the President, that if there is anything in the world I can do for the government, to call on me freely, and they shall command my services. O, how I love the glorious Union — the stars and the stripes — the grandest nation the sun ever shone on! It is the duty of every good citizen to make any and all sacrifices to preserve and perpetuate it. But," shaking a long, bony finger in the face of the astonished listener, and

dropping his voice to a confidential whisper, "the people here cannot be trusted. They hate the government. The snake is scotched, not killed. Unless they are kept in the background, we shall have another war — I repeat it, another war. Yet many of them would do anything, or swear to any kind of oath, for the sake of getting office. Will you trust them and imperil all that has been won by the outpouring of millions of treasure and oceans of blood? I shall be most happy to advise the government and its agents. Perhaps in the course of business in Alabama you may require legal assistance. If so, command me. Rest assured, I can be depended on."

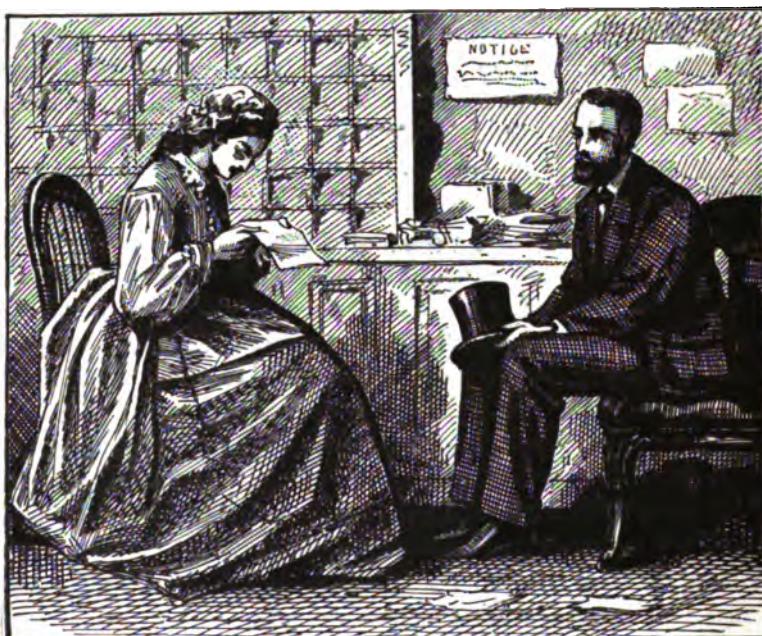
Everything earthly must come to an end, and so did the oration of Benjamin Franklin Periwinkle. One seldom encounters in a man of years and experience so transparent a humbug. Under other circumstances his rodomontade might have amused one; but, with a great deal of important work demanding immediate attention, the special agent had traveled four hundred miles on a fool's errand as it turned out, had tossed during the long hours of the previous night on a bed hard as the primitive rocks, and had given blood freely to the occupants who held the territory by right of pre-emption, so that he was in no mood to be entertained by the gush even of so eminent a patriot. The whistle, such as it was, cost too much. Besides, after opening from a masked battery on a defenseless woman, the coward lacked the nerve to meet the issue, and, when confronted with an opportunity to justify his assertions, beat an ignominious retreat.

Turning from the old wretch with mingled feelings of indignation and disgust, the agent proceeded to the post-office. The postmaster, middle-aged, intelligent, and incisive, was in attendance. Introducing himself as an agent of the department, he told her without preamble that he had come quite a distance to investigate serious charges pertaining to the management of the office. Betraying no trepidation

or embarrassment, she modestly inquired what the charges were.

He replied, "I have in my pocket a communication from a citizen to the department, wherein he accuses you of opening letters for the purpose of prying into his affairs, and also of suppressing them in some cases altogether."

The hot blood mounted to her cheeks. Said she, "I



"With no small degree of ill-suppressed wrath, she continued, 'The old rascal lies from beginning to end.'"

understand it now: there is but one man in this community mean enough to attack an unprotected woman, and that is old Ben Periwinkle."

"I have been trying," said the officer, "to learn from him the nature of the trouble, but as he evades giving specific facts to sustain the charges, I have come to you for enlightenment."

The document in question was handed her for perusal. With no small degree of ill-suppressed wrath, she continued, "The old reprobate lies from beginning to end. I never opened a letter, or detained one. I have tried to do my duty faithfully. The people here will tell you so. I come early, and stay late, striving in every way to permit the existence of no cause for complaint."

"Why is it Judge Periwinkle is so much exercised?" asked the investigator.

"The old fool," she replied, "is constantly writing to Chief Justice Chase, General Grant, and other prominent men, and because they do not answer the letters, he imagines I steal them. If they take no notice of his scribblings, I certainly cannot write replies for them. If I call spirits from the vasty deep, they will not come. Periwinkle receives promptly every letter that reaches this office addressed to him."

The officer had pursued the investigation far enough to see why the judge did not care to come in conflict with the postmaster. Besides having no case, or semblance of a case, he was no match for her sharp wit and ready tongue. The accuser having abandoned his charges, and the rest of the community being satisfied with the management of the office, nothing remained for the agent in that locality save to while away the hours till the return train arrived at two o'clock the next morning.

Inquiries confirmed the correctness of the judge's enumeration in reference to the number and variety of responsible positions he had managed to absorb. Yet, like a hungry cur, he was whining piteously for more. His thirst for office was insatiable, and, judging from the current episode in his career, he scrupled at no means to carry his ends. Why he invited an investigation, when he dared not confront a woman with his flimsy accusations, and even trembled for fear she should learn that an agent had come for the purpose, is a mystery, implying the presence of motives and impulses which find no lodgment in a well-balanced mind. A sane person cannot account

rationally for the vagaries of the insane. With an ill-defined notion of the methods by which departmental business is conducted, he may have conjectured that he was making friends and capital at head-quarters by espionage in the name of loyalty on the acts of his neighbors. If so, in this instance the venture proved a poor investment, for the officer took particular pains to ventilate the performances of "Judge" Benjamin Franklin Periwinkle where the information would "do the most good." The facts needed no comment. The orbits of the agent and the patriot never intersected afterwards, but from that day the fortunes of the professional office-hunter began to wane.

A few months later, the same special agent was sent on a similar errand to a town of about the same size in the northern part of Alabama. It was his first visit to the place, and his knowledge of the controversy to be inquired into was derived entirely from the papers forwarded from the department. These, though *ex parte*, were calculated at first sight to produce a very unfavorable impression in regard to the postmaster. It was noticeable, however, even from the documents, that the agitation was evidently instigated and kept up by a single hand. The petition praying for the removal of the incumbent bore but thirteen signatures, and those in a style of chirography which indicated that the writers were illiterate and uninfluential. The master spirit of the movement was one Digem, who, like the hero of the previous sketch, carried on his shoulders the weight of numerous official dignities, and for the sake of the country, and in the cause of sound government, was willing to have the burden still further augmented. Unlike the timid, subservient, mild-mannered Periwinkle, Digem was bold, impetuous, and aggressive. A thin, weird old man, he faltered at no peril, throwing firebrands,

arrows, and death into the camp of his foes with the zest of a school-boy at play.

Among the papers were several letters written by him to the department. He alleged that the postmaster was disloyal, disobliging, and in every way unfit for the office. Nor did he confine himself to vague generalities, but boldly asserted that on a certain Saturday night the postmaster, in connection with two other persons, endeavored to excite a mob for the purpose of breaking up a meeting of the Union League, on the pretext that the negroes were plotting to burn the town. A Doctor Cowley was given as authority for the assertion. He further stated it to be the "general belief" that "this man" was at the head of a conspiracy which had attempted to assassinate him several months previously. This rioter and cut-throat was also in the habit of suppressing letters and public documents, even going aboard the trains to take them from the hands of the route agents.

But the big gun—the columbiad of the assailants—was an affidavit from the local agent of the freedmen's bureau, who in fact appended to his official signature the following cabalistic letters: "Ag't B. R. F. & A. L." It seemed to be assumed that a name capable of sustaining such an array of alphabetical decorations would crush through all imped-



Digem.

iments with the momentum of a cannon-ball. The affidavit covered two pages of letter-sheet, and among other charges recited that the deponent had personally known the postmaster for fifteen or twenty years; that during the war he had been a hearty sympathizer with the rebellion, giving it all the aid in his power; that he had contributed freely toward the organization of a military force before the Confederacy had even a *de facto* government; that he was still an unrepentant and boisterous rebel, who prostituted his official position for the purpose of embarrassing Unionists and freedmen; that in his belief he had not discharged his duties in accordance with the regulations of the department; and that the public interests demanded his removal. The document was duly subscribed and sworn to.

The agent called first on Mr. Twombly, the postmaster, and found him a gentleman in appearance and address. He explained the object of the visit, handing him the papers for perusal. After looking them over carefully, Mr. Twombly remarked, "I am very glad you have come, and trust you will make this examination thorough. From vague threats circulating through the community, I surmised that some devilment was going on, but did not suppose that these rascals, unscrupulous as they are, would dare put their names to such atrocious falsehoods. I appreciate the kindness of the department in not acting without inquiry, and before the examination is closed you also will appreciate, I think, the wisdom of the precaution."

"Are the men," inquired the officer, "whose names appear on this petition reputable citizens?"

"I want you to see and converse with every one of them," answered Twombly. "Digem is unfortunately absent from town, but the rest are here, and can probably be drummed up without trouble. Most of them will be found loafing around the liquor saloons. As I am mayor, I will deputize a marshal to go with you in the search, or will have them brought into my office, or will render whatever aid I can in any other course you may prefer."

A runner was sent out to invite the petitioners to meet the investigator. As they straggled in, one after another, their appearance was strikingly suggestive of Falstaff's recruits ; yet they were a good-natured set of ragamuffins, answering questions freely, without reserve or evasion. All agreed that the office, under the management of Mr. Twombly, was conducted well and impartially ; that they had heard no complaints against the postmaster, and knew of no cause for his removal. Several explained that their signatures had been procured for the petition by false representations. They were told that Mr. Twombly was about to resign, and were asked to join in designating a successor. With the crowd came also the applicant for the place, supported by the petitioners. He appeared to be a good-natured, easy-going sot, of the Rip Van Winkle school — one of the last men that an intelligent community would select to fill any position of responsibility. With perfect candor, he admitted that he could give no reason whatever why he should be substituted for the actual incumbent.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in finding the bureau agent who had sworn to the cumulative charges against Mr. Twombly. If his affidavit was true, the postmaster was a perjurer liable to all the pains and penalties of the crime ; for at that time Federal officials were required to take the famous test oath, which had been worded with studious care for the purpose of excluding from the public service all who had directly or remotely participated in the war against the Union. The disabling clause ran thus :—

"And I do further solemnly swear that I have never voluntarily borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen thereof ; that I have voluntarily given no aid, countenance, counsel, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto ; that I have neither sought, nor accepted, nor attempted to exercise the functions of any office whatever, under any authority, or pretended authority, in hostility to the United States ; that I have not yielded a voluntary support to any pretended government, authority, power, or constitution within the United States, hostile or inimical thereto."

It was apparent that one of these two men had committed deliberate perjury. After a long search, the town marshal discovered Darnell, the bureau agent, and brought him in. The fellow came reluctantly, and was far from happy at the prospect of being "interviewed." As he took a seat in the little coterie of interested parties drawn together in the progress of the inquiry, he was pale and tremulous, terrified like Saul by the specter whose visitation he had helped to invoke. When the fatal affidavit was penned under the inspiration of Digem and whiskey, he did not imagine it would ever return to trouble his peace; but, like many others, he learned too late that falsehood, like a double-edged sword, cuts both ways. After reading the paper aloud, slowly and deliberately, so that each specification might be brought out with distinctness, the agent asked if the charges were true.

"They are false," he replied, "from beginning to end."

"From personal knowledge, Mr. Darnell, or from information that has come to you through others, do you think Mr. Twombly was disqualified from taking the 'test oath'?"

"No, sir. I have always understood that he was a good Unionist, and that during the war he acted consistently on that line."

"Has there been anything illegal, improper, or unfair in the management of the office since he took control of it; and if so, what?"

"I have always regarded Mr. Twombly as an excellent postmaster," he answered. "There may have been trivial complaints, but, so far as I know, these have arisen wholly from personal spite and disappointment, and have no real foundation. Efforts may have been made to prejudice against him the minds of the freedmen, who are ignorant and easily influenced; but if such a movement has been made, I have had no share in it."

"You repeat, Mr. Darnell, that the affidavit which I have read here is false?"

"Yes," said he; "to the best of my knowledge and belief,

all the charges are false. Mr. Twombly is an entirely different kind of a man."

"Did you have anything to do, Mr. Darnell, with the getting up of that affidavit?"

"Nothing," he replied. "I never saw or heard of it before."

Giving him the paper, "Is that your handwriting?" the investigator continued.

Darnell now presented a most pitiable aspect, his countenance whitening to a ghastly pallor as he stammered forth,—

"It looks like it; but if it is, I was so drunk when I wrote it that I have no recollection of it whatever. It must be my writing, and this is the only way in which it can be accounted for, as I am a truthful man, and in my right mind could never have subscribed to such falsehoods."

Trembling with agitation, he turned to the accused and to others in the room, pathetically appealing to them to bear testimony to his general good character, and appearing very grateful when they coincided in the statement that he was often so drunk as to be unconscious probably of what he was doing. The abjectness of the poor wretch converted indignation to pity, robbing even righteous resentment of its sting. If his sworn testimony was palpably false, his paltry attempt at explanation was equally so; for the affidavit was penned in



Mr. Darnell.

a clear, firm hand, and throughout bore marks of careful preparation. The body as well as the signature were in the writing of Darnell. Without doubt this was one of the most sober acts he had performed for a number of years. Having passed the crisis, he inquired, "Are you through with me?" and, being answered in the affirmative, picked up his hat, and, pale and dejected, slunk out of sight like a convicted felon. As an agent of the freedmen's bureau, this man had been intrusted with the distribution of large quantities of supplies, and with other responsibilities of a delicate nature, calling for the exercise of sobriety, tact, intelligence, and scrupulous honesty. According to the concurrent testimony of the citizens, whom the pending investigation drew together either casually or as witnesses, he had failed lamentably in every particular, numerous instances of peculation and oppression being mentioned. In due time the facts were brought to the attention of Major-General Pope, then commanding the military district, who immediately dismissed him from service on the ground that a person capable of concocting slanderous affidavits in a state of oblivious intoxication, could labor with more profit to the country in quite a different sphere.

To avoid the possibility of imposition, the agent consulted union citizens, Federal officers, and public documents in reference to the antecedents of the postmaster, learning that by common consent he was selected for the position as the most suitable person who could unqualifiedly take the oath. He appeared to be held in high estimation by all classes, the crusade against him having been instigated exclusively by Digem.

Of this fiery old gentleman, war waged by harangues within the safe limits of bloodshed, was the natural element. He gloried in military rule, and was a firm believer in the maxim, *Inter arma leges silent*. Having procured a large number of envelopes ornamented with the franks of a senator from New England and a congressman from Ohio, he attempted, in violation of law, to use them to cover an

extensive personal and political correspondence. With a similar disregard for the Statutes at Large, he also undertook to address and mail franked documents from various post-offices in Alabama, including that at his residence. Mr. Twombly, having more regard for the law than for the good-will of this economical disseminator of intelligence, politely directed his attention to the code, and, as required by the regulations of the department, forwarded the matter illegally franked to the dead-letter office. Frustrated in his efforts to defraud the revenues through the medium of the post-office, he tried to accomplish the same end by handing the packages to the route agents aboard the trains, who, under instructions from the postmaster, refused to receive them. Not to be outdone, he determined at all hazards to secure the removal of the officer whose vigilance thwarted his schemes.

A single point for investigation remained. Digem represented that on a specified Saturday night, Mr. Twombly joined with others in inciting a mob to break up a meeting of the Union League, citing for authority Doctor Cowley. The doctor not only denied having made such a statement, but declared that he had never heard of the matter before, the item being new to him. The president of the league, a reputable colored man, testified that, as mayor, Mr. Twombly, though opposed on principle to secret organizations, had always treated them well and kindly.

Thus the entire array of charges concocted to crush the postmaster crumbled to dust. Mr. Twombly continued to fill the position to the satisfaction of the community, and Digem continued to gnaw a file with growing venom till, not long after, he tottered to the grave, breathing forth slaughter to the bitter end.

Incidents like the foregoing, where the naked facts look like extravagant caricatures, might be multiplied almost in-

definitely. In long established and well regulated communities, affairs moving forward with even pace are seldom thrown out of gear by abnormal forces. To a considerable degree society becomes organically moral, treating the criminal classes as no integral part of itself, but as dangerous excrescences to be repressed or extirpated. Raiders upon the public meet with no kind of sympathy or toleration, but are hunted down like wild beasts and punished without pity. Thieves and cut-throats are compelled to hide in obscure corners, and to carry on their nefarious work under cover of darkness and secrecy. Revolutions, however, bring them to the surface in swarms, and for a while at least they fatten on the general ruin.

At the period referred to, the South was passing through a great transition, painfully conscious of present hardships, and upborne by no prophetic vision of relief and prosperity in the future. So rapid was the whirl of events and so complete the exclusion from positions of authority of the men who had long monopolized the functions of government, that temporary paralysis fell upon the people, and the fiery spirits that, during four years of bloody conflict, had shrunk from no risks and paled at no dangers, sunk down helplessly and hopelessly beneath the oppression of misgovernment. The endurance strained to its utmost tension by the waning fortunes of war, when overcome, gave way entirely.

According to the medieval philosophers, "Nature abhors a vacuum." Wherever opportunities arise for taking short cuts to preferment and wealth, adventurers stream in to fill the places like air into an exhausted receiver. Rascals with a penchant for politics, banking on the profound gratitude of the country toward the soldiers whose heroism had saved it from dismemberment, and which was still extended, though in a less degree, to the men who remained at the South to further the work of restoration, "stealing the livery of heaven to serve the devil in," used the most sacred sympathies of the nation as a screen to protect their villainies. Plotting under

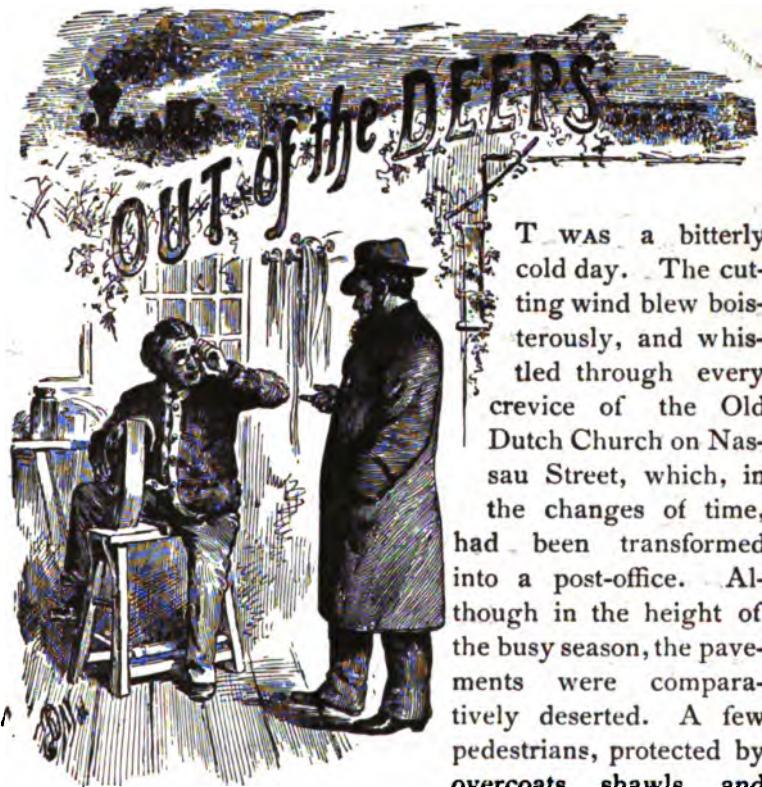
cover of intense loyalty to the government, and able in many cases to overthrow opposition by the persistent use of hard names, they succeeded in many localities in gaining a brief ascendancy, which, while winning for them no permanent benefit, brought great scandal upon the noble cause they disgraced. Active members of vigilance committees whose business it was in the sad winter preceding the war to drive the friends of the Union in terror from their homes, having experienced a change of heart with the downfall of the confederacy, now plundered the people while shouting the praises of the republic. As impudence is much more aggressive than worth, they pushed aside wherever it was possible both Federal soldiers and long-tried Southern Unionists, as not sufficiently sound for the exigencies of the hour. Falsehood, slander, and fraud, thinly veneered with professions of extravagant and exclusive loyalty, for a while were the winning cards in the desperate play for power and self.

If unsavory stories regarding former misdeeds perchance followed the embryo statesman to his newly selected home, he could point to a ready, and generally a satisfactory explanation, in the supposed malice of the "rebels." Such was the convenient scapegoat that was made to bear away into the wilderness the evidence of a multitude of sins. It was not difficult to hide the facts of a troublesome record, or to conceal schemes of future villainy under cover of the prevalent disorder.

Happily the evil, like all evils of mushroom growth, passed into rapid decay. The penitentiary absorbed a fair share of the miscreants. Some sought safety in voluntary exile. Many, having squandered their ill-gotten gains, are now wandering as vagabonds on the face of the earth. "The strong hours conquer." Time is the great avenger.

It would be false and cruelly unjust to intimate that the migratory movement southward after the war was made up to any great extent of bad material, or that it was inspired by improper motives. Large numbers of northern men went

thither to follow legitimate pursuits by honorable methods. Many became identified with the somewhat complex scheme of reconstruction, filling both State and Federal offices with honor to themselves and advantage to the public. Justly claiming that the whole country belongs equally to all its citizens, they had no apologies to offer for standing up as the champions of political doctrines that grated harshly upon unfamiliar ears. In the presence of temptations on one side, and of opprobium on the other, they have continued to follow the line of duty honestly and courageously, till in many cases they have overcome the most inveterate prejudices, and have conquered places in the respect and esteem of those who were once ready to fight their opinions with fire.



"As the stranger entered, he found the proprietor engaged at his trade."

other wrappings, hurried along as if fate depended on speed. Clouds of fine, frozen dust swept by to the additional discomfort of travelers. Overhead, the sky looked gray and gloomy, as if the weight of snow buried in its bosom oppressed it like some dark secret. It was one of those days when the more fortunate classes of society appreciate to the full the cosy comforts of home, and when, too, the houseless and hungry shiver anew at each fresh blast, and look for

T WAS a bitterly cold day. The cutting wind blew boisterously, and whistled through every crevice of the Old Dutch Church on Nassau Street, which, in the changes of time, had been transformed into a post-office. Although in the height of the busy season, the pavements were comparatively deserted. A few pedestrians, protected by overcoats, shawls, and

ward with one solitary hope to the barren warmth of the grave.

Before a bright coal-grate in one of the rooms of the Nassau Street post-office a gentleman was examining a huge package of papers, and at intervals giving sundry directions to a clerk. Having just returned from a successful trip in the service of the government, he was reading the correspondence which had accumulated during his absence, and deciding upon the first step to be taken in each of the multitudinous cases submitted for his action.

"Ah!" thought he, as a blast of more than ordinary fierceness howled at the window, "how lucky I was to reach home a day ahead of the polar wave."

Just then a quick rap was heard at the door.

"Come in," answered the inmate.

A messenger from the telegraph office entered, and delivered a dispatch. It read thus:—

"To B. K. SHARRETTs, Special Agent Post-Office Department, New York City.

"Come to Frostburgh at once. Urgent case.

"W. A. ARROW, U. S. Dist. Atty."

The situation was trying; but Mr. Sharretts is an officer who never at the call of duty pauses to consider matters of personal convenience or comfort. His resolution was instantly taken. The United States attorney would not summon him so pressingly unless in his judgment the emergency, whatever it might be, demanded his immediate presence. Accordingly, other business was dropped to make hasty preparations for the journey. In three hours from the receipt of the telegram, the special agent was hurrying northward by the fast express. Meanwhile,

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow; and driving o'er the fields
Seems nowhere to alight; the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven."

The train flew past villages and cities. After watching awhile the frantic gambols of the snowflakes, the officer yielded to a feeling of drowsiness, and fell asleep. After a nap of uncertain length, suddenly the engine gave a shrill whistle, and with a jar that awakened the somnolent passengers the train came to a stop. Night had fallen, and the concussion extinguishing the lamps, a scene of confusion followed. The more timorous thought of collisions, and stretched their sleepy limbs to see if the bones were still unbroken. It was soon learned that the locomotive had plunged headlong into a heavy drift, where it was likely to remain during the rest of the night. Whatever hopes of extrication may at first have animated the more sanguine were soon dissipated by the rapidly falling flakes, which quickly filled the passage behind as well as before, completing the barricade.

It was six miles to the nearest station. Although supperless and hungry, no passenger would have the hardihood to attempt the journey on such a night, over a road buried beneath the drifts, and in the teeth of a driving storm. The only alternative was to accept the situation with the best grace possible.

To crown the sufferings of the unfortunate travelers, the fires from lack of fuel gradually sunk lower and lower, till little more than the ashes remained. Probably some remember that night as the most uncomfortable they ever passed.

In the gray of the morning, engines crept up from both directions to the relief of the imprisoned train. After an hour or two of vigorous shoveling, the passage was cleared, and once more they were free. Without further interruption the traveler reached Frostburgh, and, after riding a mile in an open sleigh, with the thermometer ten degrees below zero, found a temporary haven at the village hotel, where a thorough ablution and a hot breakfast restored his customary serenity.

Thus refreshed, he proceeded to the office of the United States district attorney, to learn the nature of the trouble that prompted the message. Mr. Arrow was in. After the inter-

change of the ordinary courtesies, they came directly to the business in hand. With the single exception of the substitution of fictitious for real names, the facts throughout are given as they occurred.

It appeared that William Garmo had for many years held the position of postmaster at Forsyth, a small village twenty-one miles from Frostburgh. During the period, notwithstanding an occasional growl from some dissatisfied patron of the office, nothing to the discredit of the incumbent had hitherto assumed tangible form. A short time before, however, a mysterious loss had occurred under circumstances which led the public generally to believe that William Garmo was the thief. A letter containing eleven twenty-dollar bills, issued by the Faneuil Hall Bank of Boston, and addressed to Mr. Aminadab Luffer at Forsyth, was proven by incontestable evidence to have reached that office, but there all trace of it was lost. When the party addressed called for his mail, this letter was not given to him, though he had been anxiously expecting the remittance for a number of days, and had more than once mentioned the fact to the postmaster.

Not hearing from his correspondent, Mr. Luffer wrote a letter of inquiry, and was informed in reply, that on a certain date, the two hundred and twenty dollars as described had been mailed to him. During the interval the tax-collector received from Mr. Garmo two twenty-dollar bills of the Faneuil Hall Bank. By diligent inquiries Mr. Luffer learned from two or three credible parties, that about the time the expected remittance should have arrived, a letter inclosed in a long envelope of the official size, somewhat mutilated at the end, and bearing his address, was seen inside the office. As he had received no communication corresponding to the description, he inferred that this must be the valuable packet, and the conclusion was corroborated by the subsequent statement of the remitter. Although it could not be shown that the numbers of the notes paid out by Mr. Garmo were identical with the numbers inclosed to Mr. Luffer, yet twenty-dollar bills of the Faneuil Hall

Bank were such a rarity in the neighborhood, that the public generally required no additional evidence to convince them that, overpowered by the temptation, the postmaster had appropriated to his own use the contents of the letter. Aminadab openly accused Garmo of stealing his money, and demanded its return. When that official, denying all knowledge of the loss, declined to make it good, the sufferer simultaneously began a civil suit in the state courts for the recovery of the amount, and started a petition for the removal of the postmaster. The evidence, though circumstantial, seemed so strong to the United States attorney, that he felt it to be a duty to take prompt action, and accordingly sent for the special agent by telegraph.

After giving an outline of the case, Mr. Arrow added, by way of qualification, that he was personally acquainted with Mr. Garmo, whose reputation up to the time of this unhappy event had, so far as he knew, been unblemished. The charge had filled him with surprise, but it seemed to be too well supported by the facts to be allowed to pass unnoticed by the government. The demands of justice are impartial and inexorable. If William Garmo had sinned, William Garmo must suffer the penalty.

Provided with a warrant for the arrest of the accused, to be used if the evidence on close sifting was found to sustain the charge beyond reasonable doubt, the special agent prepared, without a moment of needless delay, for the long, cold, and dreary ride. The polar wave, sweeping across the continent from the Rocky Mountains, was just about at the point of culmination. Having procured a sleigh with a sturdy span of horses, and the companionship of the assistant postmaster at Frostburgh, who was also to act as pilot, they were soon driving at a rapid pace along the banks of the St. Lawrence, so well protected by wraps and robes that the hyperborean blasts were scarcely felt.

For some distance the road was in fine condition, and being the favorite drive of the town, was thronged with gay pleasure-

seekers. The silvery tinkling of bells near and far, the sharp crackle of the snow beneath the runners of the vehicles, and, above all, the stimulus of the clear, pure air, so exhilarated the officer, that, while the panorama lasted, he entirely forgot the fatigues of the past twenty-four hours, as well as the painful business before him.

The first five miles of the journey were quickly accomplished, and there they diverged from the beaten highway into an unfrequented by-road. The plain behind was as smooth and level as a billiard-table, but in front a succession of spurs intersected the track. Over the greater part of the route the surface of the deep snow was unbroken save by the passage of log sleds, which left two deep, parallel cuts in the crust, and a hollow trail in the centre, made by the huge tree-trunks as these were dragged from the forest to the saw-mills. As a consequence, the progress of the travelers was beset with difficulty and even a slight smack of danger. Upsets were not unfrequent; and as the gentleman from Frostburgh was "twice as thin" as the special agent, according to the phraseology of the Milesian, the sleigh uniformly careened to the same side, landing the heavy weight at the bottom, with the assistant postmaster and the other contents of the vehicle on top. The horses, though free and spirited, had evidently been trained to expect accidents of this character, for with each overturn they instantly stopped, and stood patiently till the *status quo* was restored.

When the travelers reached Forsyth, the day was far advanced, and they were nearly frozen. By the external application of ice-water to his benumbed extremities, and the inward application of hot drinks, whether of coffee or something weaker the record makes no mention, the agent of the post-office department was soon thawed out and ready again for work.

In the present investigation it was unnecessary for the agent to conceal his official character, or to consume time in efforts to entrap the supposed thief while actually engaged in the perpetration of a fresh robbery. One question alone demanded answer: Did the postmaster steal the letter containing the

two hundred and twenty dollars mailed to Aminadab Luffer? If so, it might be his first offense, committed in a moment of weakness, and bitterly lamented afterwards; but the law knows no distinction between the initial crime and the fiftieth.

As a preliminary step, he desired to learn how Mr. Garmo stood in the community, and what opinion the neighbors entertained in regard to the particular transaction which had caused unparalleled excitement in the locality, and formed the uppermost topic of conversation. The village hotel-keeper had been commended to him as a person of shrewdness, judgment, and candor, who would be likely to absorb all the current gossip, and reflect with tolerable accuracy the general sentiment of the public. A brief conversation with that dignitary, on matters of common interest, satisfied the detective that he could not go to a better source in quest of the desired information. He accordingly explained the object of his mission, and asked for a confidential but unreserved statement in reference to the antecedents of the postmaster, and the facts of the supposed robbery.

The proprietor, remarking in a self-congratulatory manner, by way of preface, "I thought I knew what brought you here," proceeded, in answer to various questions, to describe the character and surroundings of Mr. Garmo. He said that till the recent unhappy occurrence his reputation had always been excellent, not a serious word having ever been whispered against his fair fame. In point of worldly gear, his circumstances were good. His wife was a Christian woman of high character and accomplishments, beautiful, intelligent, amiable, whom all respected and loved. Two sons, aged respectively fifteen and twelve, were the brightest as well as the best-trained boys in the village. In brief, the family in every respect was a model for imitation.

Besides discharging the duties of postmaster, Mr. Garmo carried on the business of harness-maker; and the revenue from both sources was supposed to yield a handsome income. So far as known, he never ventured even upon the edge of

the dangerous sea of speculation, thus exposing himself to an under-current of temptation which too often lures to ruin the well-intentioned but weak. In the pecuniary circumstances of the man no motive could be found for the commission of the theft. "Yet," continued the innkeeper, "this is a dead sure thing on him; and, although I am truly sorry, I s'pose he'll have to be put through."



"'Yet,' continued the innkeeper, 'this is a dead sure thing on him; and, although I am truly sorry, I s'pose he'll have to be put through.'"

Further inquiry elicited the information that upon the day of the supposed robbery a soldier was buried at Forsyth and an ox slaughtered—two unusual occurrences, which served both to identify the date and to collect in the village a concourse of people from the surrounding country. It was supposed that Garmo took advantage of the confusion and excitement to cover the commission of the crime.

At this stage of the inquiry the prospect looked dark for Mr. Garmo. Now thoroughly posted in all the facts known to the public, the detective proceeded to the post-office to interview the party whose reputation, whether deservedly or not, seemed to be forever blasted. The office was kept in a small room partitioned off from the work-shop. A glance discovered that it was neat and orderly, a fact indicating, so far as it went, that the incumbent took pride in the business, and would be likely to perform its duties with fidelity. As the stranger entered, he found the proprietor employed at his trade. The man looked up, and their eyes met. Accustomed to read countenances with an insight that approaches divination, the detective instantaneously decided that the face before him was peculiarly open and honest. As salutations were exchanged, the voice and manner of the harness-maker confirmed the favorable impression.

"Are you Mr. Garmo the postmaster?" inquired the special agent.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Well, sir, I have to inform you that I am a special agent of the post-office department, and the object of my visit will, I presume, be readily surmised by you."

"Yes, sir," said he, with a deep-drawn sigh; "I expected it."

With the view of testing the resiliency of the postmaster, he resolved to deliver a heavy blow, and to closely watch the effect.

"Such being the case, Mr. Garmo, I conclude no formality is necessary, and I am compelled to request you to accompany me to Frostburgh at once."

"Well, sir, I am ready to go; but as true as I have a soul to be saved or lost, I am innocent of the crime charged upon me."

This was uttered in a low, tremulous tone, so sorrow-laden that it sounded like the last plaint from a broken heart. At the same time an expression of rayless agony, the outcome of days and nights of continuous anguish, overspread his features,

as if the final spark of hope, after a long and terrible but losing struggle, was now extinguished forever.

The sympathies of the detective, deep, tender, and responsive,—though few would suspect the fact,—were profoundly moved. He answered with perceptible emotion,—

"I feel sincerely sorry for you, Mr. Garmo, and earnestly trust that the investigation will establish your entire innocence of all complicity in this most wretched and melancholy affair."

"No, sir,—no, sir, it never will," he exclaimed. "Though I may be declared guiltless, the stigma will remain, leaving me a branded and ruined man. O, my God, my God! what have I done to bring this distress upon me and mine? Compared with this horrible torture, death on the rack would be happiness!"

His words expired in convulsive sobbing. An outflow of tears having partially restored his composure, he resumed in a voice frequently interrupted by spasms of choking,—

"You cannot tell, sir, what thoughts rack my poor brain during the long and sleepless night. Suicide is sinful in the sight of God, and dreadful to think about. Yet, were I alone in the world, I might be driven to it. But my good, dear wife! my brave, noble boys! I want to be with them, if not here, hereafter. Look at my poor suffering wife. She is nearly crazed. Look at her, and may our blessed Father save you from such agony."

Trembling like an aspen leaf, as if barely able to stand, he pointed toward a window in the adjoining house. A woman of commanding form and of a face divinely beautiful in its unutterable sadness, paced the floor, unconscious of the presence of a stranger, unconscious of everything except the woe that lay like a mountain upon her crushed and bleeding heart.

The despair in that countenance acted upon the brain of the detective like a draught of magic potency. The effect was electric. His nerves thrilled, and his excited heart-throbs seemed to articulate "There is no crime in this household."

Despite the damning circumstances which enveloped the unfortunate man, the inspiration came down with resistless power.

He felt, he *knew* that the postmaster was unjustly accused; and grasping his hand, exclaimed from a heart full to overflowing,—

"Mr. Garmo, I believe you are innocent, and I think I can help you to establish the fact here in your own home. Come, let us sit down and talk the matter over calmly."

The assurance of the detective acted like a sedative upon the shattered nerves of the accused. He soon regained a tolerable degree of composure, answering the questions put to him candidly, without manifesting any disposition to withhold the facts. He was assisted in the post-office by his elder son, who was in charge the day when the Luffer letter went astray. The younger boy occasionally aided, though both were legally incompetent, being under sixteen years of age.

On the day so fatal to the peace of this family, Mr. Garmo assisted at the funeral ceremonies of the soldier who returned home wounded from the Army of the Potomac, to die among friends. According to the best of his recollection he was so busily occupied elsewhere that he did not visit the office at all. He had questioned his boys about the letter, but they could remember nothing in regard to it, though it was rumored about the village that one of them was seen to handle that day a large letter, through a torn end of which money was observed inside. Such in substance was all the father appeared to know about the mysterious loss. A patient, passive, timorous man, he wilted at the first rude breath of suspicion, lacking the courage to grapple the charge and throttle it at the outset. Conduct dictated by constitutional faint-heartedness was hastily construed by the public as a tacit admission of guilt.

On learning how the duties of the office were performed, the agent conjectured that the elder son, having probably seen the money while left alone in charge of the business, could not resist the temptation to take it. Without assigning a reason for the request, he accordingly indicated to the father a desire to converse with the boy alone. He was sent for, and soon made his appearance. Taking him into a side-room, under

the impression that he was the real culprit, the agent labored assiduously to extort an acknowledgment of guilt. Said he,—

"James, I have come a long distance on a very sad errand. Your good, kind father, whom you love so dearly, is accused of stealing. He is the postmaster, and has to bear the blame of every wrong done in the office. When you commit an error, he suffers for it; your poor father may not know anything about it, yet the punishment falls on him. It will crush you by and by, too, for God sees and never forgets. Yes, he will have to be arrested, and tried before a great many people, and sent to prison, to languish for years in a grated cell behind iron bars. When he is gone, what will become of your sweet, gentle mother, whose heart is already broken? She cannot bear the anguish. She will die. With your father in prison and your mother in the grave, what is there for you and your little brother to look forward to? How much better to confess and save them. You are young yet; and although the crime is great, the neighbors will forgive it; and if you do right hereafter, God will also forgive it. Now, James, tell me the truth, and save your poor, agonized parents. You know how dreadful are their sufferings. Do not permit their misery to continue any longer. What did you do with that letter for Mr. Luffer?"

"I do not know anything about the letter," answered James, after the officer had exhausted the powers of pathos.

"James, James, I am astonished to find one so young as you, so hardened in crime. Only fifteen years old, and already a thief and a liar! What will become of you? If you live, what a monster of wickedness you will grow into! I have never seen such a case before, and hope never to see another."

The words were terrible; but the officer was following a blind trail, determined at all hazards to reach the truth. If the boy was guilty, he deserved it; if innocent, the arrows, though dipped in gall, were sure to glance harmless from the armor of honesty, to be lost and forgotten. Again the lad replied,—

"I do not know anything about the letter. If I did, I would tell you. I can't tell what I don't know."

To every fresh charge he answered in substantially the same terms, till the questioner became satisfied that the youth was really as ignorant of the affair as he claimed to be. Convinced that it would be a waste of labor to work longer at that lead, he said,—

"Well, James, you may go now. Send your younger brother to me."

The detective was greatly puzzled. He tried over and over to build up a theory to suit the facts; but the repeated attempts only led to still deeper perplexities. Without being able to give a satisfactory reason for the conclusion, he was already convinced that neither Garmo nor the older boy had purloined the letter. And yet the letter was gone. Suddenly it occurred to him that he had omitted to speak to the postmaster about the money paid to the tax-collector. Here was an ugly fact on the very threshold of the inquiry, which might bar out the entry of confidence, and show that the previous expressions of trust in the honesty of that official were ill-advised and premature. He instantly beckoned him into the private room, and watching with the alertness of a hawk the effect of the words, remarked,—

"I forgot to ask you, Mr. Garmo, from whom you obtained the Faneuil Hall Bank bills with which you paid your taxes."

Without the slightest hesitation he replied,—

"From Mr. Silas Rafferty."

"Who is Mr. Silas Rafferty?"

"A cattle-buyer from Massachusetts, who comes this way two or three times a year to purchase stock."

"What transactions had you with Mr. Rafferty?"

"I had a bill against him for harness and harness-mending."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know."

"When did you see him last?"

"I do not remember to have seen him since he paid me the bill. He may have returned to Massachusetts. He is only here at odd intervals."



Here was a weak spot in the case; but it did not shake the conclusion of the detective.

At this juncture the younger son entered, and the father was asked to withdraw. Before a word was uttered, the little fellow burst into tears, and sobbed so piteously that all efforts to comfort him proved futile. At length the officer began to wonder if the real perpetrator of all the mischief stood before him. Finding that tones of tenderness failed to soothe the child, he changed his tactics, and assuming a sternness which he did not feel, said peremptorily, —

"Stop your crying at once, and answer my questions. What is your name?"

"Willie Garmo, sir," he replied.

"Now, Willie," continued the officer, "I want you to sit down beside me. I know you are a good boy, and am sure you will give straightforward answers to the questions I am going to ask you. Your poor father is in trouble, and your mamma — "

At this point the child rose from his seat, and placing his little hand on the knee of the detective, looked up trustfully, as if catching a gleam of sunshine through a rift in the clouds. The boy was remarkably handsome, with a frank, open, ingenuous countenance, the spiritual beauty of which had never been marred by falsehood or guile. The man upon whose breast the storms of many years had beaten, was drawn toward the little fellow by a resistless fascination. In a long and eventful experience he never appreciated before what dignity, impressiveness, and power may lie enshrined in the face of a sinless child. With quick intuition the boy caught the look of sympathy, and nestled more closely under the shelter of his new friend.

"Please, sir," he began, "none of us stole the letter."

"What letter?" queried the officer, as not a word had before been uttered on the subject.

"Why, the letter Mr. Luffer says papa stole," he replied. "None of us took it; but papa and mamma are almost crazy

about it. They don't eat or sleep; and I am sure it will kill them. When brother or I go out, the boys shout 'letter-thief!' after us. They snowball us and break our windows, so that we are afraid and ashamed to be seen on the streets. O, if you could only know how my dear mamma suffers, I am sure you would pity her!"

"Willie," asked the officer gently, "have you tried to think how the letter may have been lost?"

"Yes, sir, I have. I believe a boy across the street knows something about it; but he won't tell, because he is mad at brother and me."

"What is the name of the boy?"

"Frank Potwin, sir."

Further inquiries elicited the information that on the black day for the Garmo family, Frank quarreled with a comrade at the slaughterhouse. After exchanging hard words, the belligerents clinched. In the tussle, Frank was overpowered and by main force was seated on an iron kettle which happened to stand conveniently near. The tripod, narrow at the top, bellied out into the familiar form of such utensils, below. As the fat, rotund lad was pressed down still harder in the struggle, he became impacted in the kettle like the cork in a champagne-bottle. When permitted to rise up, the ornament still clung to him, laying the foundation for a magnificent display of the Grecian bend. The spectators laughed and shouted immoderately at the novel sight, which served to still further intensify the exasperation of the vanquished youth. James Garmo took quite a conspicuous part in the fun, so that Frank was particularly incensed against him. When, a few days later, the scandal of the lost letter



"He became impacted in the kettle like the cork in a champagne-bottle."

began to agitate the public, a capital opportunity to retaliate was thrown in his way, which he improved to the utmost. Frank led the snowballing parties, and practised lustily at shouting "letter-thief." On one occasion he intimated to Willie Garmo, in a boastful, tantalizing way, that he knew something about the letter, but wouldn't tell. Willie mentioned the circumstance at home, but none of the family paid any attention to the matter, regarding it merely as a piece of childish badinage. The special agent, accustomed to permit no incident, however trifling it might appear, to pass unnoticed, resolved to see Master Frank, to learn the meaning of his talk. He accordingly inquired, "Willie, where can I find Frank Potwin?"

"He lives just above that cooper shop," answered Willie, pointing diagonally across the way; "and there he is now."

In the direction indicated, a rough-looking youth was sauntering lazily along, basket in hand, evidently bound to a neighboring grocery for supplies. In an instant the plans of the officer were laid. Waiting till the lad had proceeded a sufficient distance to prevent the family at home from seeing the subsequent movements, he followed rapidly behind, and laying his hand lightly on the shoulder of the late belligerent, saluted him in a perfectly familiar and matter-of-fact tone, "Why, how do you do, Frank? How are all at home?"

Looking up in surprise, the youngster replied, —

"I don't know you."

"O yes, you do, Frank. Don't you remember I came up when you had that fight at the slaughter-house. They used you very meanly. I wanted to thrash the fellow who put you in the kettle. He was a great deal bigger than you, and ought to have been ashamed of himself. You hit hard, though."

By this time the attention of Master Frank was fully aroused. A strongly built, square-jawed, round-eyed little fellow, he reveled in fisticuffs as the highest entertainment the village afforded. The implied compliment to his method of delivering blows at an antagonist, was evidently received with keen relish.

But the countenance of the juvenile boxer betrayed a decided state of mental mystification. Here was a man who knew about him, but whom he could not remember. Without allowing him a moment for the recovery of his scattered thoughts, the detective continued: "Don't you recollect, Frank, that I was at the post-office when you took Mr. Luf-fer's letter?"

This was a desperate venture, but it proved a safe one, for in an instant he replied, "I didn't get the letter. It was Tony Eldridge. That was before he went to Brier Hill to live."

"So it was," answered the detective, with *non-chalance*, as if slowly recovering incidents which had partially escaped from the memory. "So it was."

"Yes," said Frank; "when he got it out he showed it to me, and I saw the money, for the end was all tor'd. It was a big, fat letter, an' I tol' him he orter keep it."

A tremor of excitement ran through the frame of the officer, for he felt that he was on the verge of an important discovery. Frank had obviously told all he knew about the matter, so that it was useless to spend more time in pumping at that spring. He accordingly dismissed the lad with some trite observation entirely foreign to the subject in hand, and the little fellow, glad to be free again, went on, whistling unconcernedly, to finish his errand.

The agent recrossed the street, and returned to the post-



"O, yes, you do, Frank."

office to confer with Mr. Garmo. "Do you know," he inquired, "a boy named Tony Eldridge?"

"Yes," replied the postmaster; "he used to live in the village here. I believe he has moved to Brier Hill. I haven't seen him for some time."

"Do you think you can find him?"

"I guess so. I'll try, if you wish it. Why do you want him?"

"Through him," answered the detective, "I hope to get news of the lost letter. Hitch up your team, and drive for your life to Brier Hill. Bring the boy *nolens volens*, but do not intimate in any way who wants him or what he is wanted for."

The postmaster required no spurs to urge him on. Putting on an overcoat, he shot out of the door and was off. In an incredibly short time he returned, bringing a well-grown youth whom the agent correctly surmised to be Tony Eldridge. As the stranger leaped from the sleigh, he caught him by the arm, and hurried him into the side-room to get him away from a number of people — acquaintances, and, perhaps, friends — who had congregated about the entrance to the post office. Closing the door of the private apartment, the agent prepared for business. His first conjecture was, that if the fellow really took the letter as stated by Frank Potwin, he had destroyed it after appropriating the contents. Assuming the truth of the theory, would the guilty party at this late day admit the fact, or deny everything? If, as was probable, he decided upon the latter policy, what evidence had the detective except the childish statement of Frank Potwin? Shortly before, he seemed to be sailing before the breeze, over smooth waters, under a bright sky; but now, when the critical moment arrived, a thick fog obscured the fair prospect, leaving it doubtful in what direction to steer for the desired haven.

A glance sufficed to discover that Tony had a tell-tale face. At any rate, in the contest of wits, the rude country boy would be likely to prove a very unequal match for the trained man of affairs. The officer determined to surprise the truth out of him by an unexpected and vigorous attack, and accordingly

demanded, in a harsh, peremptory voice, "What did you do, sir, with the letter for Mr. Luffer, which you took from this post-office the day the soldier was buried?"

The youth hesitated a moment, not, apparently, because anything troubled his conscience, but for the purpose of refreshing his memory, and then replied, composedly, as if the transaction was one of commonplace occurrence, "Why, I gave it to Mrs. Bliss."

"Who is Mrs. Bliss?"

"She is an old lady living at Round Bay. A good many have their mail left there."

The postmaster was now invited to join the conference. It appeared that Mrs. Bliss, an elderly lady of great excellency of character, resided in a back settlement several miles distant. Her house, located near the junction of two important roads, was the focal point of the neighborhood, letters, papers, and other packets being left there to await the call of the owners. Mr. Luffer lived near by, and had long been in the habit of having his mail left at her house, whoever went to Forsyth bringing back everything that belonged to the community.

"Well," remarked the special agent, "you must both go with me to Round Bay, to learn what Mrs. Bliss remembers about the letter." The three jumped into the sleigh, drew the buffalo-robe around them, and were off on a fast trot. The cold was still intense, and "rude Boreas, blustering railer," seemed to sweep down without obstruction from his home at the north pole.

"Sharp wind! keen wind! cutting as word arrows,
Empty thy quiver-full! Pass by! What is it to thee
That in some mortal eyes life's whole bright circle narrows
To one misery?"

Thus far everything worked favorably, and the omens were auspicious for a happy issue of the inquiry. On the road they soon met a traveler who was recognized as the son of Mr. Silas Rafferty, the Massachusetts drover, from whom Mr. Garmo, according to his own statement, received the two

twenty-dollar bills on the Faneuil Hall Bank, which were subsequently paid to the tax-collector, making one of the strongest links in the chain of evidence against him. The sleigh was brought to a stop, and the officer briefly explained the character of the information which he desired to obtain.

After relieving his vocal organs of a flood of tobacco-juice, the youth, applying to his immediate paternal ancestor an epithet not intended to be irreverent, replied, "Wall, the old man kin tell you better about it than me. He'll be along directly. He drove over to the hollow there, to say a word or two to a man he's been dickerin' with, and won't be hindered a minute. There he comes now."

Just then a short, stout man drove up in the dusk, and stopped his horse with a loud "whoa!"—an effort entirely superfluous, as the animal seemed much more inclined to stand than to move. Without waiting for the formality of an introduction, the special agent began: "Mr. Rafferty, I am very glad to meet you. Mr. Garmo, the postmaster, is in trouble about a lost letter, and you may be able to aid in clearing up the mystery."

"In trouble?" ejaculated the drover, interrogatively; "what do you mean? I have heard nothing."

The agent answered the question by asking another. "When did you reach town, Mr. Rafferty?"

"I came to-day, and hope to get off to-morrow; but what's the trouble?"

In a few words the matter was explained, all of which was news to the honest cattle-buyer.

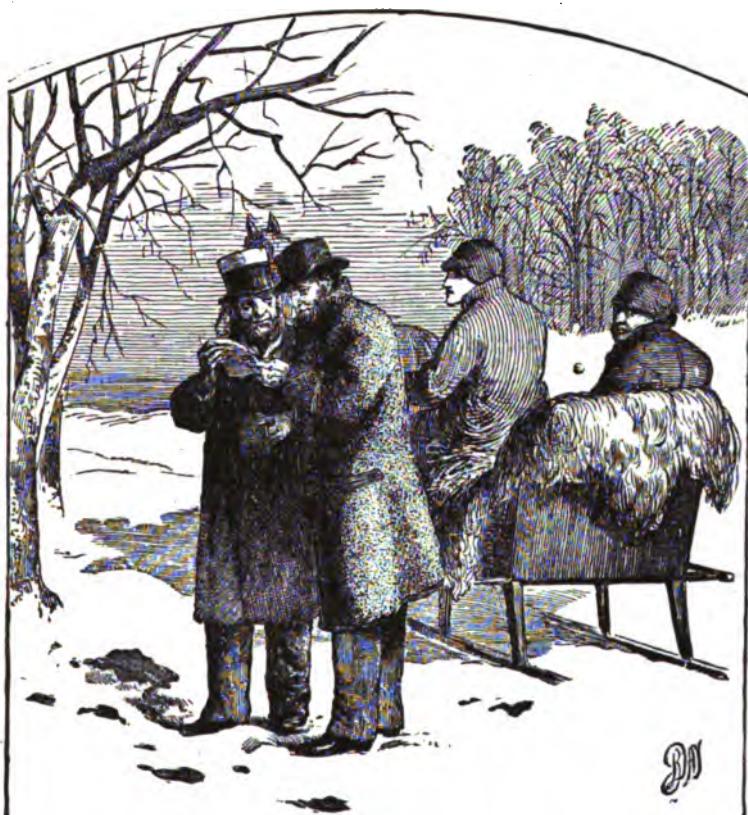
"Wall," said he, "so far as I'm consarn'd, the statement of Mr. Garmo is correct in every partic'lar. I've got the receipt in my pocket, and some more bills of the same sort."

"I am sorry to trouble you," answered the agent, "but as this is a matter of great importance to Mr. Garmo, I should like to see the papers with my own eyes."

"Very well," replied the drover, "I can easily satisfy you."

The officer jumped out, and sprang to the side of Mr. Raf-

ferty, who produced a capacious pocket-book, and there, sure enough, were several bills of the same denomination on the same bank, and a receipt for thirty-eight dollars and ten cents, signed by William Garmo. The twilight was fast deepening



"The officer jumped out, and sprang to the side of Mr. Rafferty."

into darkness, but the eager reader, aided by the reflection from the pure white snow, was enabled to decipher the writing. Thus the story of the postmaster was fully corroborated both by the testimony of the drover and by the contents of the pocket-book.

It was certainly a remarkable coincidence that the detective

and the cattle-buyer, after a journey of several hundred miles on the part of each, should arrive at the same time in a remote and secluded neighborhood, to meet on the only day when the two could be thrown together in a way likely to further the ends of the investigation. The historiographer cannot, like the writer of romance, group characters and events to suit the plot, but is compelled, in dealing with hard, uncompromising facts, to report them as they occur, whether the incidents fit into the narrative artistically or not. Perhaps no pursuit in real life so abounds in strange situations and unexpected but logical *dénouements* as the business of the detective. That the sin of the evil-doer, though sunk "deeper than e'er plummet sounded," will find him out, receives in his round of experience repeated and startling exemplifications. Here, on the other hand, occurs a conjunction, perfectly natural in one view, yet very extraordinary in another, which contributes materially to lift from the shoulders of innocence, a burden of odium none the less heavy because undeserved.

"There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

With the infinite resources of Omniscience and Omnipotence arrayed against the evil-doer, it is marvelous that any man dare take the first step in a career of villainy. With all the powers of Heaven enlisted on the side of truth and justice, it is almost equally strange that the consciously right ever despair even when the prospect looks blackest. Human vision cannot see the end, cannot indeed penetrate at all into the bosom of futurity; but, in the order of nature, troubles arising from no fault of the sufferer, form the most evanescent of clouds, intercepting for a moment only the light from the divine presence. Failure to recognize the law, old as time and broad as the universe, continually folding us in its beneficence, springs from our inherent short-sightedness.

Parting from the drover with light hearts and renewed confidence in the successful issue of the present enterprise, the

party from Forsyth, pressing on to Round Bay, soon drew rein in front of an old-fashioned house with gables and projecting eaves such as swallows love in summer. An ancient oaken door, divided into an upper and lower half, and built obviously to serve as a barricade against the Indians in case of need, closed the front entrance. The rat-tat-tat of the callers brought speedy answer, the door being opened with a warm welcome by the mistress of the establishment, a woman in the early winter of life, whose lovely face bore record to countless acts of beneficence. In a silvery voice she invited the party to "walk in," when the detective scrutinized sharply but quietly the exterior of the next figure to appear in this singular drama. Of medium height, slightly inclined to *embonpoint*, with a full face surmounting a double chin, hair of soft, dark brown that had been stroked so caressingly by Father Time that hardly a white thread left trace of his finger-marks, and a countenance of remarkable sweetness and benevolence, Mrs. Bliss was recognized at once as the good angel of the neighborhood, whom the young consulted in their joys, and to whom the troubled came with the burden of their sorrows, assured of finding in her presence both sympathy and consolation. Her eyes had lost little of their early lustre. In fact, her general person forcibly illustrated the preservative power of equanimity and goodness. Yet it could be seen at once that she had enjoyed few advantages of education or society, and that her culture, such as it was, was the spontaneous outgrowth of a pure and noble soul.

In crossing the threshold into the interior of the cottage, the visitor seemed to be translated from the nineteenth century back to the depths of the medieval period. Flames from a fireplace broad and deep enough to roast an ox, cast a ruddy light upon the antique furniture, upon the fitches of bacon, skeins of yarn, bunches of thyme and other medicinal herbs that hung from the raftered ceiling, and danced in bright reflections upon the polished oaken floor, bare of carpet and almost painfully clean. Here was all the simplicity, varied only by the

greater abundance of comfort, of the times when Saxons and Normans were struggling for mastery on the soil of "Merrie England."

As soon as the party were cosily seated around the open fire, the special agent explained to Mrs. Bliss the object of the visit, and how far and favorably the investigation had progressed. Said he, "I trust, madam, you will be able to furnish the only link now lacking in the chain of evidence. Do you remember anything about the letter for Mr. Luffer?"

"Really," she replied, "I do not. A great many are left here first and last, but I do not remember any one in particular."

Tony Eldridge then spoke up. "Don't you recollect, Mrs. Bliss? I was going to Forsyth with a load of oats that day, when you called after me and asked me to bring down the mail from the post-office; and don't you recollect when I came back I brought a big letter, torn on the end, which I did up in a newspaper to keep the money from dropping out?"

Unlike her beauty, the memory of the old lady was fast fading, and she replied, after trying in vain to recall the vanished circumstance, "Very likely, Tony, you brought me such a letter, but I don't remember anything about it. I don't, indeed."

The agent was not a little annoyed and perplexed at the unfavorable turn in the current of developments. While debating mentally on the step to be taken next, his attention was attracted by a wheezing, gasping noise to a corner of the room partially concealed by the shadow of the huge chimney, where a unique apparition, resembling most an animated telescope, seemed to rise, joint by joint, in the obscurity. As the officer watched the gradual evolution of the figure, he observed that the object was bifurcated below and crowned with a human head above. Near the base of the rafters, the upward movement came to a stop, when a man, extremely tall, slender, and stooping, was outlined in the dusky light. Having completed the unfolding process, the ghostly form, in Smallweedian voice, began,—

"Yes, mammy, ugh! ugh! I remember Tony's bringing the letter, ugh! ugh! 'cause I wondered who was sending oats to market so late. You and Lyddy (a little granddaughter) went out when Tony holler'd and brought in the letter and a newspa-per, and you said they were for Luffer. And that's all Tony had,—ugh! ugh!"

Having delivered this long, but under the circumstances highly interesting speech, the telescope closed section by section. The memory of Mrs. Bliss having been jogged by her husband,—for such was the relation the tall man bore to her,—placed her chin between the thumb and index-finger of the left hand, and thought the matter over. All at once the circumstance seemed to come back in perfect freshness. With animated countenance and sparkling eye, she exclaimed, "O, yes, yes, yes, I know now. I took the letter, and folded the paper about it like a little basket, and brought the corners together so it could be carried safely. I gave it to Julie Luffer, Mr. Luffer's little girl, and told her to go home by the lane; but the little thing didn't mind. She would go across the lots, and I 'spect she dropped out the letter in clim'in' the fences. I remember the facts now just as they occurred."

At length rose the truth, though crushed to earth and ground in dust by the heels of hard and thoughtless men. Step by step, by evidence that could not be impeached or questioned, the letter, whose hitherto unaccountable disappearance had brought so many troubles upon the house of Garmo, had now been traced from the post-office into the hands of a member of Mr. Luffer's own family. Once more William Garmo could stand up before the world with garments unspotted. When the last cord was cut which bound the load of undeserved obloquy to the back of the postmaster, and it rolled away like the pack from the shoulders of Christian, he almost ran wild with delight. The special agent under whose guidance the battle had been fought, and by whose skill the victory had been won, though

more temperate in its outward manifestation, shared fully in the general joy.

One thing only seemed wanting to complete the circle of happiness, and that was the presence of Mr. Luffer. The detective did not doubt for a moment that he would be equally pleased with the rest at the vindication of Mr. Garmo, an old neighbor and friend. As he lived but a short distance away, he was sent for and soon made his appearance. The gentleman was evidently surprised to encounter in company with a stranger, the person whom he



Aminadab Luffer.

was hunting down with suits and petitions ; but to reassure him and give him a chance to participate in the rejoicing, the agent briefly narrated the events of the day, which demonstrated conclusively the guiltlessness of the postmaster. The intelligence produced an effect entirely unexpected. To the amazement of the officer, Aminadab pretended to disbelieve the whole story, adding in an extremely offensive manner, "Who are you, anyhow? It is d—n strange none of these wonderful discoveries were made before you came. You may think I am green."

Of Aminadab the poet might truly say : —

"Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort,
As if he mock'd himself, and scor'd his spirit,
That could be mov'd to smile at anything."

Naturally weak, the man had one overpowering passion that lent to his character a deceptive show of strength. Avarice mastered his thoughts, driving him onward to acts which little comported with his native prudence and timidity.

Aminadab had not yet taken a seat, but stood in the middle of the floor holding in a temporizing way the chair placed there for his convenience. The fire-light played queerly on his face, exaggerating perhaps the repulsive features of a countenance unprepossessing at best. A crop of short,

coarse, red hair rivaled the flames in brilliancy of hue, and admirably matched the color of his nose; a narrow upper lip utterly refused to cover a ragged set of teeth; while two cold, cruel eyes kept winking and blinking as if the lids in very shame strove to close the curtains upon the abject meanness of the soul within. A short, stout body propped upon a pair of bow-legs completed the *tout-ensemble* of Aminadab Luffer.

The insulting tones of the wretch still rung in the ears of the detective, who eyed him with ineffable disgust as the most repulsive and dastardly creature, outside of the professedly criminal classes, whom fate had ever thrown in his path. Several comparisons, by no means complimentary, at once suggested themselves. As particularly pertinent to the situation he thought of the man Charles Lamb in his stuttering fashion used to tell about. "A certain sect have a belief that when a child is b-born, the soul of a dying m-man passes into the child. Now when N— was b-born, n-nobody died." Then he recalled the comparison, expressive but a little mixed, uttered by a jolly jack-tar to a messmate in speaking of a disreputable acquaintance: "How I wish I had as much tobacco as he looks like the devil."

Meanwhile Aminadab had been massing his feeble mental forces for a fresh assault. Turning to the stranger, he broke forth again, "What, in the name of h—" (mentioning a locality supposed to have been set apart for the special use and benefit of such characters) "brought you here to mix up in our affairs and make trouble?"

Incensed by the vulgar manner and intemperate language of Aminadab, the officer rose up and made two or three strides across the room with the purpose of knocking him down. In excuse for this sudden outbreak of almost uncontrollable passion, it must be remembered that he had not slept for forty hours, and that his feelings were wrought up to the highest tension by the incidents of the day. In such a frame of mind one is in no humor to bear insults with

meekness. Aminadab staggered back, conscious that he had gone too far.

Seeing that trouble was brewing, Mrs. Bliss, by a quick move, threw herself between the angry combatants, and opened a vigorous fire upon the party in the wrong. "For



Aminadab in danger.

the good Lord's sake, Mr. Luffer, what makes you talk so ! What'll these people think to hear you go on in this way ? I know the letter you're talking about come here. Tony Eldridge brung it down from the post-office. I gave it and a newspaper to your little daughter to take home. If you didn't get it, she must have lost it ; and when the snow goes

off, I guess you'll find it 'longside some of the fences she clim'd over."

The explicit statement of Mrs. Bliss, buttressed as it was by a mass of overwhelming concurrent evidence, seemed to leave no hook to hang a doubt on. Aminadab, however, pretended to still remain incredulous. Quitting the barricade behind the chair, he paced the floor like a caged hyena for a few minutes, and then turning suddenly to the officer, as if struck by a new plan, remarked, in a much more respectful tone than heretofore, "I would like to speak with you privately in the next room."

"Well, sir," replied that gentleman, "I am at your service;" and followed into another apartment, closing the door behind.

The agent broke the silence by asking, "What have you to say, sir?"

"I am almost dumb with surprise," he replied, "at the turn things have taken, and I want your advice as to what I should do. I was so sure, and so was everybody else, that Garmo stole the money, and (*sotto voce*) I don't know but he did yet, that I went to Frostburgh and brought suit against him for the amount. I also started a petition for his removal, which was filled with signers. I had good proof, too, that Garmo paid away some of my money. Now here you come, and in one day upset everything by making it appear that the letter was brought to this house and given to one of my children. If your conclusions are correct, how is it the facts were not found out before? How can you see where the rest of us were blind?"

"The principal reason, I presume," replied the agent, to whom the various incisive proceedings enumerated by the speaker were already well known, "is, that every one who heard the stories afloat believed with you, and accepting their truthfulness without question, took no pains to get at the facts. I came hither for the specific purpose of finding out the exact truth, and, thank the Lord, I have succeeded."

"Yes, yes,—h'm, h'm," replied Aminadab, clearing his throat. "What shall I do about it?"

"I have no advice to give, Mr. Luffer; but if I were in your place, I would go to Mr. Garmo, I would take him by the hand, and would say, 'My old friend and neighbor, forgive me for what I have said and done in this matter. I had what I supposed to be undeniable proof of your dishonesty, and in this belief was sustained by the general opinion of the community. Now that the mystery is explained and your innocence established, I ask your pardon. Allow me to be the first to congratulate you.' This is the only reparation you can make for the injury done to Mr. Garmo, and this much at least is due to him. Your mistake was a natural one, and the apology ought, under the circumstances, be amply satisfactory."

The manly suggestion of the officer made no visible impression upon the mind of Aminadab. With the snarl of a cur, he replied, "I'll be d—d if I do!"

"Then, sir," answered the officer, "it is needless to prolong our conference. In this private interview I have not obtruded upon you either my presence or counsel. At your solicitation I came into this room, and at your solicitation I have spoken. Our conceptions of what is due from man to man differ so widely that nothing I can say is likely to prove serviceable to you." He then started for the door.

At that moment Aminadab was evidently tortured by conflicting emotions. Perhaps the latent spark of humanity, forgotten from long disuse, and buried under a mountain of avarice and greed, like Enceladus under *Ætna*, made a final effort to reach the hardened heart. Raising the palm of the right hand to his forehead, and looking downward in an attitude of meditation, he exclaimed, "Do not go yet."

The special agent stopped and inquired, "What will you have?"

If better feelings were struggling for transitory mastery in the soul of the miser, the contest was brief, the selfishness

long nourished quickly resuming full sway. The nature of the mental conflict was outlined in the next remark. "I do not know about all this. It may be so; it may not. I can't tell. Anyhow, a man who can do what you have done to-day, ought to be able to show a fellow a way out of trouble."

Aminadab began to realize that in the measures taken for the punishment of the postmaster he had gone too fast and too far, and his present aim appeared to be to find some plan for throwing off the load of responsibility and opprobrium.

As might be inferred, the special agent was in no humor to assist. He said, "Mr. Luffer, it is not in my power to aid you, for the simple reason that our ideas of duty are totally diverse. I am off for Frostburgh at once. My official mission really ended at Forsyth when I learned that your letter had been delivered to Tony Eldridge. By a custom repeatedly sanctioned by you he was authorized to receive it. When it passed into his hands, the responsibility of the postmaster and the supervision of the department ceased. Finding, however, the family of Mr. Garmo overwhelmed by distress, ostracized in the community where they had always lived, and subjected to cruel persecution, I determined to remain till I sifted the matter to the bottom, never surmising for a moment that any individual would throw the slightest obstacle in the way. Do you know the boy, Mr. Luffer, who gave the letter to Mrs. Bliss?"

"Yes," replied Aminadab. "He used to go to school to me."

"Well, sir," queried the agent, "do you think that boy would lie, and by telling the story he has, render himself liable to arrest?"

Aminadab made no reply, but gave his shoulders an elaborate shrug.

"Sir," resumed the officer, "I have no hesitation in expressing the opinion that you are a very bad man. If you know the lad, why don't you speak out instead of attempting

to stab his reputation by a covert and cowardly distortion of your person. I might add that such gestures do not become your style of beauty, but forbear, as it is not my province to quarrel with nature. Fortunately no words or acts of yours can injure Tony Eldridge in my estimation. I know he has told the truth. I know also that Mr. Bliss has told the truth. I have now finished my work here, and am happy to say that nothing I have ever done has given me more satisfaction."

During the conference the merry jingling of bells was heard in the street; and as the officer returned to the common sitting-room, he was surprised to see quite a crowd of people entering through the front door. It proved to be a party of ladies and gentlemen on the way home from a public entertainment. As the house of Mrs. Bliss was a general rendezvous, they had stopped to exchange greetings.

"Well," thought the special agent, "this is certainly a day of happy coincidences. As the news of the supposed criminality of Garmo has been spread broadcast through the county, and commented upon in every household, here is an admirable opportunity to send the antidote after the poison."

Stepping into the midst of the company, without introduction or ceremony, he began : "Ladies and gentlemen, permit a stranger to say a few words to you. Doubtless you have all heard of the crime alleged to have been committed by this neighbor of yours, Mr. William Garmo, postmaster at Forsyth. From my observations to-day, I infer that, throughout a circuit of many miles, hardly a man, woman, or child can be found who does not believe him guilty. As a consequence, public odium rests heavily upon him, and through him upon his grief-stricken family. For his sake, for their sake, for your sake, I am happy to say that he is innocent. I am a special agent of the post-office department, and came a long distance to investigate this case. I have discovered that the lost letter was brought from Forsyth to this very house by Tony Eldridge, and was here placed by Mrs. Bliss herself in the

hands of a child of Mr. Luffer. Both individuals remember the facts distinctly, and there can be no mistake about the accuracy of their statements. I have also seen the man who paid Mr. Garmo the bills supposed to have been stolen from this very troublesome letter. The entire mystery surrounding the transaction has been explained, and the vindication of the postmaster at Forsyth is complete. I have spoken much more at length than I intended to. In conclusion, allow me to solicit your co-operation in freeing the reputation of this gentleman from the stain that temporarily rests upon it. On the way to your respective homes stop at every house where the lights are still burning, — even wake up the inmates if necessary, — and proclaim the facts, so that this worthy but greatly wronged man may be immediately reinstated in the good opinion of all."

The remarks of the officer were received with a wild outburst of enthusiasm. The company, irrespective of age and sex, pressing around William Garmo, threatened to drown him in a storm of tears and congratulations. In an instant the branded outcast soared upward to the pinnacle of popular favor.

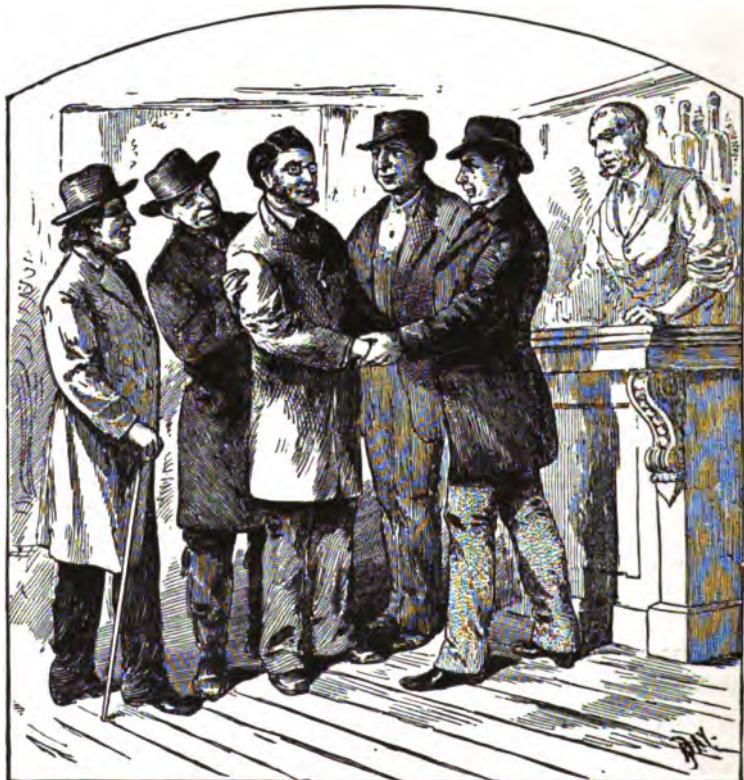
But the night was wearing away, and the company soon began to disperse. "Come, we must go," said the agent; and, taking violent possession of the postmaster, he hurried him off to the sleigh.

It was ten o'clock when they drove up to the door of the hotel at Forsyth, but the good news had preceded them. The inn was thronged with villagers waiting to welcome the postmaster. They cheered, vociferated, and otherwise manifested their excitement in many original and fantastic ways. As might be expected, those lately most loud and bitter in denunciation were now foremost in felicitations.

A lusty old farmer, considerably under the influence of Bourbon, seizing the hand of Garmo with the gripe of a vise, expressed the sentiment that seemed to be uppermost, "I knew you didn't do it, Billy. It's all right now. Come and take

something. Throw care to the dogs. Bury your bother under the snow, to go off with the first freshet."

So great was the revulsion of feeling that the poor postmaster was almost delirious with excitement. The crowd hurried him to the bar, and might have tempted him to cross



Garmo receiving the congratulations of his friends.

the bounds of prudence, had not the watchfulness of the special agent prevented. At that moment the thoughts of the stranger were not with the noisy throng, but with the agonized wife and children. Taking Garmo by the arm, he said, "You must now tell your friends good-night. I will see you home, and must then start for Frostburgh."

The villagers now surrounded the special agent, and protested against the proposed journey. "Pray, do not leave us to-night!" exclaimed one.

"What are you made of," said another, "to think of starting on a journey of twenty miles at this hour, after such a glorious day's work as you have done? Stay with us, and we'll have a regular celebration to-morrow."

"You forget," chimed in a third, "that the thermometer is below zero, and you may perish on the road."

Telling the landlord to have the horses in readiness, and bidding the assembled company adieu, he started across the street arm-in-arm with the postmaster. As they entered the house, the wife rose and struggled to control her feelings. Advancing a few steps toward her, the officer said, "Madam, I bring back to you your husband as pure in character and spotless in reputation as when he led you to the marriage altar. The letter has been traced into the family of Mr. Luffer. All the dark and perplexing circumstances connected with it have been fully explained. Your sorrow is at an end."

Although previously informed of the favorable result of the investigation, the announcement overpowered her. She reeled, and, before assistance could reach her, fell to the floor. Instantly a number of females rushed in, and, from their apparent solicitude for her welfare, one might have inferred that an angel band had descended from the gates of paradise to minister to a beloved sister in distress. Alas, during the long weeks of anguish and darkness, now happily drawn to a close, the same women had kept studiously aloof!

After a while Mrs. Garmo recovered, when the intruders were respectfully requested to retire. The sons were then awakened and called in. To them the story was briefly told. The little family gathered lovingly about the detective, listening with rapt attention to every word. A subdued and holy joy irradiated the faces lately overcast with hopeless gloom. James and Willie clung to him as if they could not bear to have their benefactor depart. But the sacred spell must be

broken. Night had already worn into the short hours of morning, and the moment of separation had come. At this juncture Mrs. Garmo, —

“Grace in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love,” —

threw her arms around the neck of the detective, and imprinted a heaven-born kiss upon his forehead. “God bless you, God bless you!” was the prayer that went up in tearful accents from the lips of the united household.

In the bright moonlight the journey of twenty-one miles was quickly and safely accomplished, a faint blush of red tingeing the eastern sky as the travelers alighted at the hotel in Frostburgh. In twenty minutes the officer was in bed fast asleep. The nap, however, was not destined to be lengthy or refreshing. Hardly had the weary brain entered the land of dreams when a storm of rude raps rattled against the chamber-door. Under the impression that the hotel porter had blunderingly awakened the wrong passenger, the sleeper aroused sufficiently to mutter a mild malediction, and, turning upon the other side, instantly dropped again into the state of unconsciousness. At such times the imagination, relieved of the guidance of reason, works with wonderful rapidity. In a few seconds the dreamer passed through all the horrors of a great conflagration. He seemed to be on the topmost floor of an immense building, with every avenue of escape cut off by the flames. After rushing hither and thither in vain search for an outlet, he was borne down in the final crash, and, while falling through space, was awakened a second time by a fusilade of heavy knocks upon the door.

With the painful impressions of the nightmare still upon him, he called out sharply, “Who’s there?” still supposing that the disturber of his slumbers had made a mistake.

“It’s me,” answered a squeaky voice not entirely unfamiliar.

“And who is me?” queried the agent.

“Mr. Luffer,” replied the man outside.

Sure enough, when the door opened, that extraordinary individual wriggled with a worm-like movement into the room. Once in, he stood motionless, cap in hand, humble as a serf, gazing abstractedly at the rarefied attire of the rudely awakened sleeper. As the costume of the inmate was decidedly Spartan, he did not care to prolong the interview unnecessarily in the frosty air. Accordingly, after waiting in vain for the visitor to propound the object of this unseasonable interruption, he asked, —

"What will you have, Mr. Luffer?"

"Well," replied that worthy, "I have thought the matter all over, and have come to the conclusion to do the right thing. I called to ask you to go with me to see my lawyer to have the suit against Garmo withdrawn."

Supposing that the professions of amendment were genuine, the agent said, with much more kindness than he had hitherto felt for the creature, "I shall be happy to meet you at the office of Mr. V—— at ten o'clock;" and thereupon bowed out the intruder. Ringing for a servant, he gave directions to be called at half past nine, and till that hour slept without further disturbance.

At the appointed time he called at the office of the lawyer — a gentleman of great excellence of character who has since passed on to his final rest. Aminadab was already on hand. After a little preliminary conversation, the special agent remarked that he dropped in at the request of Mr. Luffer, who wished to do justice to an old neighbor whose innocence of a suspected crime had been clearly established the day before.

"How is this?" inquired the lawyer. "Luffer tells me he still believes in the guilt of Garmo, but, as you advised him to withdraw the suit that in your opinion cannot be maintained in face of the extraordinary evidence developed in some mysterious manner by your visit, he came to Frostburgh to carry the suggestion into effect."

The officer divined in a moment the sinister motive that prompted the lying wretch to follow him. He desired to save

counsel-fees, and invented the story to mask his mercenary purpose.

"Mr. V——," began the agent, "pardon me if I use strong language, for I cannot repress the indignation I feel at the conduct of this false, cowardly, despicable creature. He knows that the postmaster at Forsyth is innocent. The statement that he comes by my advice to withdraw the suit is an unmitigated lie, told with the design of cheating you out of your fees. I trust you will make him pay to the last farthing, for a man who can persecute a neighbor as he has persecuted Garmo, deserves no consideration whatever."

The officer then gave a *résumé* of the facts, which entirely satisfied the mind of the lawyer of the blamelessness of the postmaster. Mr. V—— expressed great gratification at the result of the inquiry, heartily thanking the agent of the department.

Aminadab, writhing like a scotched snake, hardly knew in which direction to strike next. Baffled at every point, the insolence which supplied the place of courage was fast oozing away. Turning in a deprecatory manner to the lawyer, he said, "This man blames me for trying to find my lost letter. If I have good reasons for believing that a postmaster steals, am I to be made odious for saying so?"

"Let me answer that question," replied the agent. "Every citizen, in duty to himself and the public, ought to report promptly all losses occurring in the mails, and, in cases of dishonesty, to co-operate in bringing the thieves to punishment. But this does not justify one in making reckless accusations, or in trifling with the fair fame of others. Least of all does it excuse one for pursuing as a felon an official proved to be innocent."

Subsequently the special agent called at the office of the district attorney, the dispatch from whom, it will be remembered, brought him to Frostburgh. A brief statement to him closed the connection of the detective with this remarkable case.

The affair shows the peril of relying too confidently upon circumstantial evidence. Had Garmo been arrested and brought to trial without a thorough sifting of the facts, he might have been convicted. Even if acquitted, the cordon of proof enveloped him so closely that many would have believed him guilty, and his prospects would have been blasted. The reputations, the liberties, and the lives of many innocent persons have been sacrificed, where similar thoroughness and skill in winnowing the evidence would have prevented the horrible mistakes in the administration of justice. It is the province of the detective to protect the right as well as to expose the wrong.

When the spring came, and the warm breezes melted the snows on the banks of the St. Lawrence, a stained, water-soaked package was picked up in a fence corner between the houses of Mrs. Bliss and Mr. Luffer. It proved to be a letter containing eleven twenty-dollar bills, on the Faneuil Hall Bank, in good state of preservation. The faded superscription showed that it belonged to Aminadab Luffer, and the inclosed missive explained the rest.

The discovery was a severe blow to Aminadab, for he had not ceased to assert the belief that William Garmo stole the money, and that by some "hocus-pocus" the detective continued to hide the theft. "For," he inquired triumphantly, as if the proposition admitted of no controversy, "are not all detectives rascals?"

When the missing letter with the inclosures intact was placed in his hands, not a breath of contrition, or a kind word for the man whom he had so cruelly wronged, escaped from his lips. Scourged by evil thoughts and groveling ambitions, he walks the earth in moral solitude with the brand upon his brow.

"The wretch, concentered all in self,
Living shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonor'd, and unsung."

IN CONCLUSION.

THE post-office department counts its employés by thousands and by tens of thousands. The "certainty, celerity, and security," which characterize the operations of this vast establishment, show how faithfully the work, in the main, is performed. The system, however, is not exempt from the imperfections incident to all human enterprises. Some who are not honest gain admission to the ranks; and the books of the division of mail depredations record the numbers that are yearly apprehended in the commission of crime.

While it may appear ungracious for a writer to assume that any among his readers are liable to the weaknesses which permit so many to stumble and to fall, there is a class, small in comparison with the whole number associated in the work of handling the mails, who need to be specially warned by the teachings of example. Very few, after entering upon a course of dishonesty, ever stop voluntarily. The theory of detection in the postal service is based on the assumption that the thief will continue to steal, for the "appetite grows by what it feeds on." As every finger-mark, however cunningly disguised, points to the guilty hand, exposure and punishment, under a thoroughly organized system of supervision, follow as a necessary sequence.

But considerations far above the mere fear of retribution

should lead one under all circumstances to cleave steadfastly to the right. Though the tempter offer the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them for a single act of pollution, the bribe must be spurned. Wrong acts poison character, deaden conscience, debauch the sensibilities, and pilot the way with dread certainty to ever-deepening abysses, not because others discover them or God sees them, but because the fatal knowledge dwells in the heart of the guilty. Within, hidden perhaps from the suspicion of the world, the awful hieroglyphics are traced in letters of flame, ready to blaze forth on some day of judgment, near or far, compelling the soul to pronounce its own sentence of condemnation.

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